PETER J. AWN

SATAN'S TRAGEDY AND REDEMPTION: IBLĪS IN SUFI PSYCHOLOGY

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STUDIES

IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

(SUPPLEMENTS TO *NUMEN*)

EDITED BY

M. HEERMA VAN VOSS • E. J. SHARPE • R. J. Z. WERBLOWSKY

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LEIDEN
E. J. BRILL
1983

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BY

PETER J. AWN

With a foreword by Annemarie Schimmel

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To my Parents, Sisters and Brother

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FOREWORD

Many years ago, W. A. Bijlefeld wrote in a review of my book *Gabriel's Wing* that Iqbāl's way of depicting the tragic figure of Satan moved him much more than the 'normal' Christian approach to Satan. Iblīs appears in Iqbāl's *Jāvīdnāma* as the true monotheist, the fallen angel who once seduced man and caused his fall into the 'real world', which also meant that he gave him the chance of choosing between good and evil and thus of maturing in long periods of struggle. Iqbāl's Iblīs is not happy when man becomes too obedient to him, for he himself has seen the fruits of overstressed obedience, which, in the interpretation of some mystics, caused his own fall. Iqbāl shows Satan longing for the one who will resist him and finally overcome him so that, by the end of time, he will perform the prostration before the perfected man, which he refused to perform before the immature and inexperienced Adam, and will thus, finally, be saved.

Ever since I began working on Iqbāl's poetry, the figure of his multi-faceted Satan attracted me, and Hellmut Ritter's remark that, in the epics of ʿAṭṭār, Satan eventually becomes 'more monotheistic than God Himself' never ceased to fascinate me. It was almost inevitable that this interest in the unorthodox Satanology of some of the great Sufi poets should also influence my students, who, time and again, ask why, for instance, the great Sufi poet of Sind, Shāh ʿAbdul Laṭīf (†1752 C.E.) should sing *ʿāshiq ʿAzāzīl*, "The true lover is Satan".

This book by Peter J. Awn, is, in a certain way, the fruit of our reading Sufi poetry and particularly Sanāʾī's tragic poem which, in a nutshell, describes in simple, deepfelt verses the problem of the 'teacher of the angels' who, after thousands of years of obedience, saw on the Well-preserved Tablet that one servant of God would be condemned in eternity, and, only too late, recognized that he himself was intended by this sentence. Sanāʾī's poem, one of the greatest and most personal expressions of the dilemma of everyone who is caught, like the Qurʾānic Iblīs, between God's Will and His Command, formed the nucleus of the book in which, for the first time, the role of Iblīs in the various strands of mystical theology in Islam are studied, and the positive and negative reactions of theologians and mystics toward the Iblīsian figure are elucidated. It thus opens a rather little known aspect of Islamic mysticism, but at the same time makes the reader meditate upon the basic dilemma of man as it was forcefully to be expressed and finally experienced by Al-Ḥallāj, whose *Kitāb aṭ-ṭawāsīn* contains the first allusions

to the tragedy of Satan, and from whom a number of other mystics in the Persianate world learned the secret of the Iblīsian *tawḥīd*—some of them finally sharing Al-Ḥallāj's tragic fate.

The colorful, multifaceted Iblīs as he is shown by Peter Awn's book will certainly continue to tempt or at least confuse people and thus, as Iqbāl (following Goethe) held, will constitute the principle of fruitful restlessness in human life without which true spiritual development is impossible. He may be able to make man realize some deeper levels of experience and, at the same time, give a new insight into the eternal problem of theology and also of history of religion, namely, how to explain the role of evil, and how to cope with it.

Cambridge, Massachusetts
on the anniversary of
Al-Ḥallāj's execution,
March 26, 1981

Annemarie Schimmel

PREFACE

This study was first presented as a doctoral thesis at Harvard University in the Spring of 1978. Since that time it has undergone numerous corrections, alterations and revisions. However, the substance of the study remains unchanged.

Throughout the research and the preparation of the manuscript, many people generously offered their help, time and expertise. First and foremost I would like to express my thanks to Prof. Dr. Annemarie Schimmel whose direction and encouragement have been invaluable throughout the process of research and writing. My special thanks go also to Dr. Ilse Lichtenstadter who read the manuscript and offered many helpful suggestions; to the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), especially the New York and New England Provinces, with whom I was affiliated at the time of my research, for their generous support of my studies; to Profs. Wheeler M. Thackston, George W. MacRae, S.J., John B. Carman and the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University.

I wish also to express my gratitude to Prof. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky for his insight and guidance throughout the process of revision from thesis to book form. Finally I am very grateful to my family and friends who provided the human context that allowed me to see this project through to its completion.

Subventions for the publication of the manuscript have been generously provided by the Committee on Oriental Studies of Columbia University, New York City, and Dr. Ilse Lichtenstadter, emerited of Harvard University. Without their substantial assistance, publication would not have been possible.

Of course, the responsibility for the work and for any inaccuracies it may contain is my own.

New York
March, 1981

Peter J. Awn

INTRODUCTION

A. J. Arberry introduced his classic work on Muslim mysticism with a succinct statement on the attitude towards mystical phenomena that was prevalent among his fellow orientalists and historians of religion.

> It has become a platitude to observe that mysticism is essentially one and the same, whatever may be the religion professed by the individual mystic: a constant and unvarying phenomenon of the universal yearning of the human spirit for personal communion with God.[1]

Christians and Muslims alike have focused upon mysticism as the one clearly definable experience that cuts across the barriers separating major religious traditions, for, as A. E. Affifi explains, "mysticism is the only ground on which the great religions meet."[2]

This drive to isolate and classify the phenomena that appear to represent the underlying unity among the various religious traditions has created the impression that, by conceptualizing and naming such an experience, one has somehow fully encompassed its reality. The mercury-like fluidity at the core of the concept "mysticism," however, becomes evident when this supposedly solid and univocal concept is examined in the specific religious contexts where it is actually encountered.

The Christian understanding of the mystical is admirably expressed in capsule form by Evelyn Underhill: "Mysticism, according to its historical and psychological definitions, is the direct intuition or experience of God."[3] This description, of course, can be applied to other traditions and is not in itself exclusively Christian. What is unmistakably Christian, however, is her further elaboration of the nature of this God-man encounter in the mystic state.

> No one needs, I suppose, to be told that the two chief features of Christian schematic theology are the dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation. They correlate and explain each other: forming together, for the Christian, the 'final key' to the riddle of the world. The history of practical and institutional Christianity is the history of the attempt to exhibit their meaning in space and time. The history of mystical philosophy is the history—still incomplete—of the demonstration of their meaning in eternity.[4]

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[1] A. J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1950), p. 11.

[2] A. E. Affifi, "The Rational and Mystical Interpretations of Islam," in *Islam—The Straight Path*, ed. Kenneth W. Morgan (New York: Ronald Press, 1958), p. 167.

[3] Evelyn Underhill, *The Mystics of the Church* (New York: Schocken, 1964), p. 9.

[4] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (first published 1911; reprint edition, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1961), p. 107.

The affirmation that Trinity and Incarnation are fundamental to the mystic's experience of God recasts the original description of mysticism in a mold that is singularly Christian. Thus understood, mysticism can no longer be viewed as a phenomenon that occurs in identical fashion in all the great religious traditions.

Even within the Christian family itself, there are descriptions of mystical experience that do not conform well to the general definition offered by Underhill. One example is derived to a large extent from the writings of Saint Paul. Pauline mysticism locates man's link with the Transcendent on a metaphysical plane and not in the realm of human perception; the *unio mystica* is restricted to the supernatural order.[5]

This theory of mysticism is developed at length by Alfred Wikenhauser[6] whose interpretation of the Pauline corpus is reminiscent in certain respects of the Upanishads. Mystical experience in the Pauline mode is the discovery of the fact that one is already in intimate union with God. By passing through the transforming waters of Baptism, the Christian disciple has achieved union with Christ; by nurturing this Baptismal life through prayer and the life of faith, the believer grows increasingly more aware of this mystical union which the sacramental power of Baptism has wrought in his soul.[7]

What distinguishes this perception of mysticism from that of Underhill is the presupposition that there exists a non-conscious, ontological union between the Christian and God accomplished through a sacramental system capable of producing metaphysical change in man. This view does not reflect the more common Christian understanding of the mystic Path as a growth in loving union between God and the soul, but, instead, prefers to describe the process as a growth in conscious awareness of a preexistent metaphysical union.

A shifting focus is evident in the application of the term mysticism within a Buddhist religious framework. In her preface to the translation of the important Sinhalese work, *The Yogavachara's Manual*, C. A. F. Rhys Davids asserts that the Buddhist Path is a form of mysticism because it is productive of psychic phenomena.

> Now in that this manual shows a belief in the possibility of inducing abnormal, ecstatic consciousness by method and effort, instead of leaving such visitations to possible but unsought conjunctures, it merits the name of 'mystic.'[8]

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[5] Joseph Huby, *Mystiques paulinienne et johannique* (Brussels: Desclée de Brouwer, 1946), p. 25.

[6] Alfred Wikenhauser, *Pauline Mysticism*, tr. Joseph Cunningham (Freiburg: Herder, 1960).

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 109-162.

[8] F. L. Woodward, tr., *Manual of a Mystic: The Yogavachara's Manual*, edited, with an introductory essay, by C. A. F. Rhys Davids (London: H. Milford, 1916), p. xiii.

The equation of mysticism with psychic states brought about by human effort is a far cry from the mystical experience of a personal, triune God described by Underhill. However in the ten year span following the publication of *The Yogavachara's Manual*, Mrs. Rhys Davids' understanding of mysticism seemed to evolve in the direction of Evelyn Underhill's position. In her article, "Dhyāna in Early Buddhism," she describes mysticism as:

> ...converse, usually solitary, with the unseen. Converse is access. It is communion; it is not primarily union....
>
> If we take converse, communion, with the unseen as our meaning of 'mystic,' we can, as I shall show, claim that there is mysticism, and much of it in early Buddhism.[9]

Yet even this refinement, she realizes, does not free the concept from ambiguity, for the question must be posed: what concretely is this converse-communion-access? Of what does the "unseen" consist? Mrs. Rhys Davids' dissatisfaction with her own attempts to evolve an all-encompassing definition of mysticism led her to propose in the very next paragraph that the terms "mysticism" and "mystic" be dropped; they are, she concluded, "more hindersome than helpful."[10]

Edward Conze, the renowned contemporary Buddhologist, was not discouraged by Mrs. Rhys Davids from making his own efforts to devise a conceptual framework that would embrace both Buddhist mystical experience and the experiences that other religious traditions have named mystic. His starting point is similar to that of Arberry in that he presumes mysticism to be a phenomenon that crosses the bounds of particular religious traditions.

> There are a number of methods for winning salvation by meditation, of which Buddhist tradition gives a clearer and fuller account than I have found elsewhere. This is, however, largely a matter of temperament. Properly studied, the literature of the Jains, of the Sufis, of the Christian monks of the Egyptian desert, and of what the Catholic Church calls 'ascetical' or 'mystical' theology, yields much of the same kind.[11]

Spurred by this perception of underlying unity, he proposes that religious teachings are of a mystical character when they provide men with the means to overcome the world and achieve immortality or a deathless life.[12] Here, however, the description is of such a general nature

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[9] C. A. F. Rhys Davids, "Dhyāna in Early Buddhism," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 3 (December 1927): 690-691.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 691.

[11] Edward Conze, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1951; reprint ed., New York: Harper and Row, 1959), pp. 12-13.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

that the question must be asked whether or not, at this stage, the concept mysticism has any but the barest content.

The addition of the phenomena encountered in the Hindu and Muslim mystical traditions adds to the already fluid core of the concept mysticism described above. In his provocative comparison of these two traditions, R. C. Zaehner contrasts starkly their particular apprehensions of the transcendent object of the mystic Path.[13] He characterizes the Hindu mystical tradition as an evolution from monism to theistic dualism. Beginning with the Upanishadic identity of *Ātman-Brahman*, Zaehner traces the gradual development in Hindu consciousness of the awareness of a personal God who is truly Other. In the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad* and especially in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, God reveals Himself more and more as a God of love; the stage is thus set for the evolution of Rāmānuja's theistic synthesis.

Zaehner interprets the movement of the Sufi Path along exactly opposite lines. The God of the Qurʾān is the transcendent Other, the Compassionate and the Merciful; therefore the roots of the Muslim mystical experience are found in the lover-Beloved relationship, not in the *Ātman-Brahman* identity. However, Zaehner emphasizes, later Sufism immersed itself deeply in monist theories of reality, viz., the complex works of Muḥyī ʾd-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī. Zaehner's interpretation of Sufism is perhaps over generalized, as Professor Annemarie Schimmel has pointed out. He exaggerated this evolution from theistic dualism to monism, especially when he pinpointed the alleged infiltration of Vedanic metaphysics into Sufism at such an early date, in the ecstatic utterances of the ninth century mystic, Abū Yazīd Al-Bisṭāmī. Most probably, Schimmel explains, we have in Al-Bisṭāmī's mystical sayings examples of the first formulation of the thoroughly Islamic experience of *fanāʾ*, annihilation.[14] The monistic tendencies were not to come to full flower in Sufism for well over two hundred years after Abū Yazīd.

The above remarks seem sufficient to point up the basic fallacy in presupposing that mysticism is an unvarying phenomenon which remains the same in all religious traditions. This cursory survey illustrates but a few of mysticism's myriad permutations: mysticism as the direct experience of a triune, incarnate God; mysticism as a growing awareness of the ontological union brought about through the transforming power of a sacramental system; mysticism as psychic phenomena, access-communion, an overcoming of the world and the

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[13] See R. C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (London: Athlone Press, 1960; reprint ed., New York: Schocken, 1969).

[14] Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), pp. 47-48.

attainment of a deathless life or immortality; mysticism as monism evolving towards theistic dualism, and theistic dualism moving towards monism. And these by no means exhaust the experiences that have been named mystic in man's religious experience.[15]

However, the aim of this introduction is neither to advance the opinion that there is no such thing as mysticism, nor is it simply to offer another parallel definition, alongside those offered above, of what comprises the mystical experience. Rather, the object is to highlight in concrete fashion the debilitating effects of what Clifford Geertz has aptly diagnosed as the "pigeonhole disease." This affliction is characterized by the urge to create an abundance of classificatory terms, such as, for example, mysticism, which supposedly capture fully the underlying essence, or the transcultural unity, perceived amidst the welter of diverse religious phenomena. When the attempt is made to articulate the content of these classificatory terms, it becomes apparent that the alleged perfect concept cannot perform its presumed function, i.e., embrace all of the essential qualities of an experience encountered in a variety of religio-cultural settings.

> In itself, naming things is of course a useful and necessary occupation, especially if the things named exist. But it is hardly much more than a prelude to analytic thought. And when, as in the case of comparative religion, it has not even been elaborated into some form of systematics, an organized taxonomy (as, indeed, given the ad hoc nature of the whole enterprise, it cannot be), it suggests relationships among things categorized together which have not in fact actually been discovered and asserted but only sensed and insinuated. Aside from the simple question of whether there really are any pigeons in all of these pigeonholes...the mere multiplication of generalized cover terms leads to a tendency to assume that whatever is in a particular sort of pigeonhole must be a particular sort of pigeon, else why should he be in there? And so we get discussions of 'animism' or 'totemism' or (my particular concern here and my reason for bringing all this up) 'mysticism,' governed by a premise that has not been earned: that the first step toward a scientific comprehension of religious phenomena is to reduce their diversity be assimilating them to a limited number of general types. To my mind, and given my view of what such comprehension consists of, this is

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[15] The phenomena are as varied as those encountered in the ancient traditions of China and Israel, or the pharmacological experimentation of modern questers. See Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius—The Secular as Sacred* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972) and Holmes Welch, *Taoism: The Parting of the Way* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965). The Jewish experience is masterfully described by Gershom G. Scholem in his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1954). For important treatments of drug related phenomena, see Aldous Huxley's classic work *The Doors of Perception* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1954) and, most recently, Huston Smith's appendix on "The Psychedelic Experience" in *Forgotten Truth: The Primordial Tradition* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).

> actually the first step toward denaturing our material, toward substituting cliché for description and assumption for analysis.[16]

The struggle to comprehend the mystical as it manifests itself in various traditions, Geertz explains, is doomed to failure if one labors only to create the most generalized definition possible of mysticism.

> If, however, we use a concept like 'mysticism'—or 'mystic' or 'mystical'—not to formulate an underlying uniformity behind superficially diverse phenomena, but to analyze the nature of diversity as we find it, then pursuing the different meanings the concept takes in different contexts does not dissolve its value as an ordering idea but enriches it.... In this area of study, at least, the interest of facts lies in their variety, and the power of ideas rests not on the degree to which they can dissolve that variety but the degree to which they can order it.[17]

The fact that historians of religion, in their attempts to describe the univocal character of the concept mysticism, have, in spite of themselves, attested to the diversity inherent in each tradition's experience of the mystical, is not a sign of failure but one of hope. The dynamism and vitality of man's experience of the mystical refuses to be suppressed by efforts to organize and categorize; the uniqueness surfaces in one way or another. It is in this spirit that the present study of the Muslim Satan figure's role in Islamic mysticism is initiated. The Iblīs motif represents a unique Sufi phenomenon, one that both witnesses to the distinctiveness of Islamic religious life and affords the student of religion a profound insight into the connaturality of Sufi mysticism with the mystical experiences of other religious traditions.

The thematic structure of the present work traces the parallel development of several strains of the Iblīs motif in a variety of Islamic literary genres, especially those of the mystical tradition. This study is not intended to be a comprehensive literary history of a particular Islamic period nor an in depth analysis of the corpus of one or more Sufi writers. It does, however, provide the reader with a unique overview of the treatment of a crucial religious symbol by a wide range of classical theorists whose influence on Islamic religious life is recognized in both the Muslim and non-Muslim world.

Chapter One focuses primarily on exegetical works, collections of traditions (*ḥadīth*), and stories about the prophets (*qiṣaṣ*). It would be wrong to consider these completely independent genres of religious literature. *Ḥadīth*, for example, were extremely important exegetical tools

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[16] Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 23-24.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

and play an important role in the commentary literature. The many stories about important prophetic figures of both the Old and New Testaments are equally significant in this regard.

These genres all develop out of the fascination of Islam with sacred Word, and the Islamic community's (*Umma*) struggle to plumb the depths of this dynamic Divine Reality. During the lifetime of the prophet Muḥammad (570-632 C.E.), revelation was a living reality for the nascent Muslim community; by adhering to the Word of God expressed through the instrumentality of Muḥammad, by observing the prophet's actions and by following his precepts, the newly committed Muslim believed himself to be in conformity with the explicit will of God.

After the death of Muḥammad, however, there was no longer a living instrument through whom God revealed His Word. The efforts of the early community now shifted to the collection and preservation of the Divine Revelations, some of which had been written down, others preserved in the memories of the prophet's family and faithful followers. The Islamic tradition pinpoints the final codification of a standard text of the revelations during the latter part of the caliphate of Muḥammad's third successor, ʿUthmān (†656 C.E.).

Whereas during the lifetime of Muḥammad his early followers focused on the living reality of his life and Word, now the object of the community's meditation was the text of the Qurʾān itself. Interest in the words and deeds of the prophet did not, however, cease with the codification of a standard Qurʾān text. On the contrary, similar efforts were soon underway to preserve in written form as much as possible of the traditions concerning the prophet's every word and deed. For it was clear that the Qurʾān text did not provide specific answers to every problem the community would face; it was to the *ḥadīth*, the traditions about what the prophet said and did, that the community turned for specific guidance. Six compilations of traditions are considered classic among Sunnī Muslims. Those of Al-Bukhārī (†870 C.E.) and Muslim (†875 C.E.), however, have attained precedence over the rest. Al-Bukhārī is said to have scrutinized over 600,000 traditions before settling on the over 7,000 he includes in his manual of *ḥadīth*.

It is the tradition literature, *ḥadīth*, that stands at the heart of all early attempts by Muslims to interpret the revelation experience incarnated in the Qurʾān. One of the foremost authorities on exegetical *ḥadīth* is the prophet's cousin ʿAbd Allāh Ibn ʿAbbās (†c. 688 C.E.) who claimed as the source for his numerous opinions the prophet himself.

Early attempts at Qurʾān commentary reached a milestone in the voluminous work of Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr Aṭ-Ṭabarī (†923 C.E.). His exceptional abilities as a compiler bring together much of the

traditional exegetical material that preceded him: *ḥadīth*, prophetic stories, linguistic and philological discussions, grammar and the like. He does not hesitate to provide the reader with conflicting evidence nor is he reluctant to offer his own opinion on the validity of certain source materials or on the interpretation of a particular text.

Other monumental commentaries were to follow, notably those of Abū ʾl-Qāsim Maḥmūd Ibn ʿUmar Az-Zamakhsharī (†1144 C.E.) and Fakhr Ad-Dīn Rāzī (†1209 C.E.). Several smaller works have also had and continue to have considerable formative influence on Muslim attitudes towards the Qurʾān, e.g., the commentary of Al-Bayḍāwī (†1291 C.E.) which was based on Az-Zamakhsharī's work, and that of Al-Maḥallī (†1459 C.E.) completed by his renowned student As-Suyūṭī (†1505 C.E.).

While the above classical commentaries spring from the Sunnī branch of Islam, the Shīʿite community was also actively involved in Qurʾānic exegesis aimed at validating its own conviction that hereditary religious authority had been transmitted by Muḥammad to his male heirs, later known as *imāms*. Shīʿite exegesis is also more prone to esoteric and allegorical interpretations of the text than that of the Sunnī community. The two most influential works that have continued to be sources of inspiration to the Shīʿite community are the commentaries of ʿAlī Ibn Ibrāhīm Al-Qummī (†936 C.E.) and Abū ʿAlī Al-Faḍl Aṭ-Ṭabarsī (†c. 1155 C.E.).

The Qurʾān, as divinely revealed Word, is not a text to be interpreted in isolation as if it appeared on the scene in 7th century Arabia without any forebears. Central to the Muslim understanding of Revelation is the conviction that the Divine Word communicated to Muḥammad is in continuity with the whole revelational process begun with Adam and continued on in the Jewish and Christian communities. The instruments of these earlier revelations, the prophets of old from Adam to Jesus, therefore, were objects of particular fascination in Islam. Several of the early Muslim converts from Judaism, like ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Salām (†663 C.E.) and Kaʿb al-Aḥbār (†652 C.E.), provided the early community with a wealth of lore from both canonical and apocryphal Jewish sources. Not only Jews, however, but Persians like Wahb Ibn Munabbih (†730 C.E.) and Christian converts provided Muslim preachers and exegetes with mythical and historical materials about the many prophets named in God's Word, the Qurʾān.

The first known collection of prophetic stories is that of Abū Isḥāq Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ath-Thaʿlabī (†1036 C.E.) who, not surprisingly, was also a Qurʾān commentator. This genre of literature (*qiṣaṣ*) was not, however, simply another interpretive tool in the hands of scholarly

Qur'ān commentators. It had far wider impact because of its appropriation by Muslim preachers (*quṣṣās*) who used these vivid tales for didactic purposes as well as entertainment.

The *qiṣaṣ* literature should not be viewed as wholly derivative from Jewish and Christian sources, for it underwent substantial Islamization at the hands of Muslim preachers and commentators. Cross fertilization occurred, with details, nuances and embellishments traded back and forth among the various religious communities. Finally, the influence on these tales of indigenous non-Christian or Jewish pre-Islamic beliefs should not be discounted, especially, for example, in the Indian subcontinent.

The various shapes the Iblīs motif takes on in the specifically Sufi literature of Islam is explored at length in Chapters Two and Three of this study. Here again one should not look for a chronological development of the Iblīs theme paralleling the history of Sufism. More often than not various strains of the tradition are in evidence at the same time. While it is true that at particular historical periods one strain may appear more prominent than others, there is rarely, if ever, a point where any one interpretation of the Islamic devil holds the field alone.

In the same way that the genres of commentary, traditions and prophetic tales spring from the Muslim community's preoccupation with Divine Word, so too the emergence of the mystical movement, Sufism, and its resulting literature are solidly grounded in meditation on the Qur'ān. There is no doubt that the fundamental experience in Islam is that of an all-powerful creator God to whose will one freely submits in an act of *islām*, a giving over of oneself, a self-donation. Yet the Qur'ān offers a far more complex view of the God-man relationship; its heart is a primordial covenant (Qur'ān 7:172) established by God with all the as yet uncreated souls of the men and women of His universe. It is this pre-creation intimacy that established a fundamental bond of love between the soul and God. Not only does the Qur'ān affirm the existence of this intimacy before created time, but it also reminds the believer that God is immanent in His actual creation, for wherever one looks one will see His face (Qur'ān 2:115) and He is closer to man than his own jugular vein (Qur'ān 50:16).

The struggle to create a suitable environment in which to cultivate the experience of God's immanence is reflected in the early Sufis' emphasis on the ascetical Path. One of the major centers for this 8th-9th century phenomenon was the province of Khurāsān and especially the former Buddhist city of Balkh. From Balkh came the renowned mystic Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham (†776 or 790 C.E.) whose life, as recounted in Muslim hagiographic sources, resembles closely that of the Buddha Śākhyamuni himself.

Another center for early Sufism was ʿIrāq, especially the cities of Baghdād, Baṣra and Kūfa. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (†728 C.E.), Rābiʿa Al-ʿAdawīya (†801 C.E.) and Abū ʿAbd Allāh Al-Ḥārith Ibn Asad Al-Muḥāsibī (†854 C.E.), among others, left lasting impressions on the shape of the burgeoning Sufi movement in this region of the empire.

The role of the Iblīs motif in the writings of the early Sufis reflects the preoccupation with the ascetical values of renunciation, detachment and indifference to all that distracts the soul from its quest to experience God. Iblīs/Ash-Shayṭān appears as the tempter, the symbol of those worldly forces so eager to ensnare the unwary soul.

Renunciation and detachment are often understood to be ideals touching primarily the individual's dealings with the material realm: food, clothing, money, sex, etc. More sophisticated understandings of the role of detachment, however, emphasize man's emotional and psychological life as the most significant area of concern. It is this realization that provided the impetus for highly nuanced treatments of various aspects of human psychology. The Iblīs/Ash-Shayṭān motif was put to creative use by Sufi psychologists like Al-Muḥāsibī as a means to express the subtle movements of man's psychic life as they relate to religious experience.

The effort to provide the novice with organized treatments of the theoretical foundations of the Sufi life was not restricted to the realm of psychology but touched on every dimension of the spiritual life. The late tenth and eleventh centuries saw the production of important manuals of the mystical Path, several springing from the fertile environment of Khurāsān, viz., the *Kitāb at-taʿarruf* of Abū Bakr Muḥammad Al-Kalābādhī who died at Bukhāra in 990 C.E., the *Kitāb al-lumaʿ* of Abū Naṣr ʿAbd Allāh Ibn ʿAlī As-Sarrāj from Ṭūs (†988 C.E.) and *Ar-Risālat Al-Qushayrīya* of Abū ʾl-Qāsim ʿAbd Al-Karīm Al-Qushayrī (†1074 C.E.).

From farther East came the first significant manual in the Persian language, the *Kashf al-maḥjūb* of ʿAlī Ibn ʿUthmān Al-Jullābī Al-Hujwīrī (†c. 1071 C.E.). Al-Hujwīrī wrote his treatise in Lahore, capital of the Ghaznavids who, led by their founder Maḥmūd, had established the first Muslim empire extending deep into the Indian sub-continent. To this formidable group must be added the name of Abū Ṭālib Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī Ibn ʿAṭīya Al-Ḥārithī Al-Makkī who died in Baghdād in 996 C.E. and whose work, the *Qūt al-qulūb*, influenced both Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī and Jalāl Ad-Dīn Rūmī. It remains today a classic of the mystical life.

A didactic literary genre of a different sort, namely hagiography, attained prominence during this same period in an Iranian environment

made hospitable by the Persian renaissance sparked by the 10th century dynasties of the Ṣaffārids in Eastern Iran and their neighbors to the North, the Sāmānids. In the same way that the early Qurʾānic commentators and street preachers focused on the lives of the prophets for information and inspiration, so too the Sufi community cherished the lives of its prominent members as role models. Collections of the lives of Sufis offer the reader a wealth of practical guidance in the form of the preserved sayings and teachings of particular masters as well as details about their lives.

To Abū ʿAbd Ar-Raḥmān As-Sulamī (†1021 C.E.) from Nīshāpūr is ascribed the first systematic history of the lives of the great Sufis who preceded him. This influential hagiographic work, the *Ṭabaqāt aṣ-ṣūfīya*, underwent amplification and revision first in the 11th century at the hands of ʿAbd Allāh Anṣārī (†1089 C.E.) and later by ʿAbd Ar-Raḥmān Ibn Aḥmad Jāmī (†1492 C.E.). The most complete sourcebook for the lives of the early masters is the prodigious work, the *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ* of Abū Nuʿaym Al-Iṣfahānī (†1038 C.E.) without which a great deal of historical and mythical data about the lives of the early mystics would be lost.

The developments of ascetical, theoretical and hagiographic literature in Sufism must be viewed as companion to and parallel with the development of a far more provocative expression of mystical experience, namely, the ecstatic utterance. It is here that one encounters the most problematic and yet most intriguing attempts by the mystics to convey in words the ultimately ineffable experience of union with the Beloved.

Ecstasy in Sufism has its roots at the very foundations of the movement. Abū Yazīd Al-Biṣṭāmī (†874 C.E.) is the most prominent early exponent of this startling, if not shocking, mode of mystical expression. While he himself wrote nothing, his sayings were preserved by his disciples and became the object of careful scrutiny by more sober Sufis, notably the famous Baghdādī, Abū ʾl-Qāsim Al-Junayd (†910 C.E.). Al-Biṣṭāmī's cries of "Glory to me!", "How great is my majesty!" and similar seemingly self-divinizing expressions of ecstasy, raised dramatically for the Muslim community the question of the exact nature of mystical union.

It is not possible to delve deeply here into the issue of whether such expressions are to be taken as metaphysical statements of actual identity with God or are to be seen as dramatic metaphors, expressing the mystic's conviction that the intimacy experienced is of such a nature that it is *as if* one were identified with the deity. Suffice it to say that such ecstatic utterances, especially when voiced in a public forum where the uninitiated might be grievously misled, continually vexed the non-Sufi

Islamic community and contributed to the growing tensions existing between Sufis and learned doctors of law and theology.

While Al-Bisṭāmī is the first recorded ecstatic of significant influence, his utterances are overshadowed by those of the most famous of the Baghdād mystics, Ḥusayn Ibn Manṣūr Al-Ḥallāj, who was put to death by order of the ᶜAbbāsid caliph Al-Muqtadir in 922 C.E. Al-Ḥallāj's "*Ana ʾl-Ḥaqq!*" ("I am the Divine Truth!") rings throughout the history of Sufism as the paradigmatic ecstatic utterance.

Al-Ḥallāj's mystical paradoxes range far beyond the single subject of union with the Divine; it is to Al-Ḥallāj that one must turn to discover the first elaborations of the complex tragedy surrounding the mythic personality of Iblīs. For Al-Ḥallāj Iblīs is devil yet tragic victim, condemned yet perfect in loving devotion, tempter yet teacher. While many later Sufis would not subscribe to the ecstatic mode of mysticism exemplified by Al-Ḥallāj, they did, nevertheless, assimilate much of the Iblīs mythology brought to prominence by the martyr-mystic of Baghdād.

The tension in the history of Sufism between the sober school and the ecstatic, "drunken" mystics is dramatically encapsulated in the lives of two brothers of the 11th-12th centuries whose intelectual brilliance and religious sensitivity have left indelible marks on the shape of Islamic religious life. The elder and by far the more renowned of the two is the mystic-theologian Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī (†1111 C.E.). Born in 1055 C.E. at Ṭūs in Khurāsān, Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī became a skilled practitioner of the traditional religious sciences of law and theology, and a spokesman for the Ashᶜarite school which became identified with the mainstream of Islamic philosophical theology.

Al-Ghazālī's patron, the influential vizier Niẓām Al-Mulk, appointed him professor at the Niẓāmīya in Baghdād in 1091. Beginning in 1095, however, he underwent a spiritual crisis; his life as prominent scholar appeared to him devoid of the personal religious experience that he felt essential to his survival. It was at this juncture that he abandoned his academic career to dedicate himself wholeheartedly to the Sufi Path. His personal struggle is poignantly documented in his autobiography, *Al-Munqidh min aḍ-ḍalāl* (*Deliverance from Error*).

What makes Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī especially significant for the history of Sufism, apart from his inherent brilliance, is his ability to reconcile his commitment to the traditional Islamic religious sciences with his newfound personal experience. Al-Ghazālī is perhaps the most eloquent spokesman for a sober mysticism based upon, and in conformity with, the law, philosophy and theology of the mainstream Sunnī community. Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī's *magnum opus*, the *Iḥyāʾ ᶜulūm ad-dīn* (*The Revivification of the Religious Sciences*) remains perhaps the most

influential treatise on Islamic religious life. Its topics range from the exoteric religious structures of the community and their implications for the individual Muslim to the ideals and practices of the exponents of a moderate Sufism.

Abū Ḥāmid's commitment to a sober mysticism is best witnessed by his willingness to return to his teaching post in 1106 C.E. at the urgings of Fakhr Al-Mulk, son of Niẓām Al-Mulk and vizier to the Saljuq sultan. Al-Ghazālī's mysticism did not necessitate his remaining on the fringe of the community either intellectually or physically, but challenged him to integrate his personal religious experience within the broader community framework.

Abū Ḥāmid's younger brother Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī (†1126 C.E.) was no less intelligent, nor, it appears, less trained in the intellectual pursuits of law and theology, for he replaced Abū Ḥāmid for a time at his academic post after he abandoned teaching in 1095. Yet Aḥmad's tastes were far more inclined towards the charismatic role of the street preacher than that of the staid academic. His writings cannot compete in range or quantity with those of his brother. Yet the mystical writings that have survived and the stories of his life preserved by hagiographers testify to a vibrancy of spirit and consummate skill in analyzing and capturing in words the dynamism of the mystical love relationship.

Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī's major work on mystical love, *Sawāniḥ*, couched in a disarmingly simple yet aesthetically superb Persian style, unfolds new layers of insight and meaning at each successive reading. Where Abū Ḥāmid strains to describe his mystical experience in terms acceptable to the mainstream, Aḥmad preached in the exuberant style of the ecstatic which was sure to rankle the lawyer-theologians. Aḥmad's use of the Iblīs motif was very much in conformity with his non-traditional approach to religious experience; Iblīs appears in his work as the tragic martyr of love whose single-minded dedication will eventually result in his rehabilitation.

Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī died in 1126 C.E. at an advanced age, yet his spiritual heritage lived on in the person of a brilliant young disciple, Abū ʾl-Maʿālī ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Muḥammad ʿAlī Ibn Al-Ḥasan Ibn ʿAlī Al-Mayānajī, known as ʿAin Al-Quḍāt. Born in 1098 C.E. at Hamadhān in central Iran, ʿAin Al-Quḍāt was in his late twenties at the time of the death of his revered spiritual guide, Aḥmad. His brilliance was not at all constrained by his youth; only, perhaps, his sense of prudence. His writings reflect the skill of a seasoned spiritual guide as well as the passion of the ecstatic; his works surpass those of his master in poetical refinement and general accessibility.

ʿAin Al-Quḍāt is second only to Al-Ḥallāj in the originality of his use of the Iblīs motif. It is he who provides the most vivid and well developed treatment of Iblīs' love relationship with the Beloved. His literary skills and solid grounding in philosophical theology combine to create a highly provocative and, at times, startling picture of the Islamic devil.

The tragedy of self-destruction which is so much a part of the Iblīs motif in Islamic mysticism was, ironically, to be mirrored in the life of ʿAin Al-Quḍāt. His charismatic personality attracted many disciples and inflamed the hostility of the more traditionally minded who branded his teaching heterodox in complaints to the ruling Saljuq authorities. ʿAin Al-Quḍāt was imprisoned first at Baghdād and later in his home town of Hamadhān. While in Baghdād he wrote an *Apologia* for his life and teaching, in an effort to discredit the charges of heresy laid against him. His attempt failed, and, on his transfer to Hamadhān, ʿAin Al-Quḍāt was put to death in grisly fashion by the Saljuq Sultan Maḥmūd in May of 1131 C.E. He was thirty-three years of age.

A contemporary of ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, the Ghaznavid poet Ḥakīm Abū ʾl-Majd Majdūd Ibn Ādam Sanāʾī (†c. 1131 C.E.) represents the beginning of two important phases in Sufism: one literary, the other related to the Iblīs motif. It is the poet Sanāʾī who first put the rhyming couplets of the *mathnawī* form to the service of didactic religious literature. It had originally been made famous by the epic poet Firdowsī in his *Shāhnāma* (*The Epic of the Kings*). The general outline of Sanāʾī's *mathnawī*—mystical teaching interspersed with illustrative fables, anecdotes, proverbs, and the like—became the literary model for much of the mystical literature that was to follow. Sanāʾī's work is particularly important for this study because it recapitulates many of the strains of the Iblīs tradition so masterfully developed by Sanāʾī's predecessors.

The process of thematic recapitulation reaches a unique level of comprehensiveness, however, in the *mathnawīs* of the famed druggist and spiritual guide of Nīshāpūr, Farīd Ad-Dīn ʿAṭṭār (†1220 C.E.). ʿAṭṭār's work should not be seen as simply resuming the Sufi tradition of the past. On the contrary ʿAṭṭār was a master of spiritual perspicacity, a litterateur and skilled storyteller. His *mathnawīs*, in contrast to those of Sanāʾī and Jalāl Ad-Dīn Rūmī, give evidence of well planned and carefully executed structure. Traditional themes, anecdotes and fables undergo subtle transformations at the hands of this accomplished practitioner of both literary and mystical arts.

Allusions to every strain of the Iblīs tradition—from the most sober condemnations of Iblīs as wily tempter to moving descriptions of Iblīs the tragic victim yearning for rehabilitation—can be found in the work of Farīd Ad-Dīn ʿAṭṭār. When the didactic purpose of a particular passage

so requires, ʿAṭṭār portrays Iblīs as the dog-like *nafs* (lower soul) waiting to devour the careless. Yet elsewhere Iblīs is the chamberlain to the Beloved, wielding His divine power yet torn by the grief of separation because, as chamberlain, he must stand at the door of the Presence and not at His side.

The third great master of the *mathnawī* and perhaps the greatest of the Persian mystical poets is Mawlānā Jalāl Ad-Dīn Rūmī. Rūmī was born in 1207 C.E. at Balkh, the city in Khurāsān known from the earliest days of Sufism as a center for mysticism. By 1228 his family had settled in Qonya in Anatolia to escape the imminent invasion of the Mongols.

The most formative years in Rūmī's life were those between 1244 and 1248 when he was under the personal influence of the enigmatic mystic Shams Ad-Dīn Tabrīzī whose imprint was to remain indelibly fixed on Rūmī's spirit. The obsessive quality of their relationship alienated Rūmī from his family, friends and disciples. Eventually Shams disappeared; the evidence implies murder, possibly with the cooperation of one of Rūmī's own sons.

Even though the physical presence of Shams had faded, the love Rūmī experienced became more ardent and acted as catalyst for his astonishingly prolific literary output. The intimacy between lover and beloved was such that Rūmī wrote his poetry under the name of Shams Ad-Dīn Tabrīzī, the "Sun of Tabrīz".

At the urgings of a favorite disciple, Rūmī began, in the latter part of his life, to put down his teachings and mystical vision in writing. Once completed, Rūmī's *mathnawī* exceeded 25,000 couplets and has been so revered by the Islamic Community that it is often described as the Persian Qurʾān.

Rūmī's work does not employ all of the paradoxical strains of the Iblīs motif to the extent that ʿAṭṭār employs them. Rūmī paints Iblīs as tragic victim, yet as a tragic victim who has turned vengeful and now uses his cunning to seduce man to the lesser good. For Rūmī there is no possibility that such a malevolent force could be rehabilitated. Even Iblīs' tragedy is not sufficient to win him eternal favor in Rūmī's eyes.

The important literary and theoretical advances of 12th and 13th century Sufism exemplified in the works of Sanāʾī, ʿAṭṭār and Rūmī must share the stage with one of the most creative geniuses of Islamic philosophical theology and mysticism, Muḥyī ʾd-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī (†1240 C.E.). Born at Murcia in 1165, Ibn ʿArabī received his early training under the guidance of two women spiritual masters. His travels led him from Muslim Spain to North Africa, Makka and eventually to Damascus where he settled in 1230.

Ibn ʿArabī's literary output was prodigious; the physical volume and intellectual density of his work make any definitive analysis of his thought a goal yet to be achieved. Nevertheless, his basic metaphysical stance, encapsulated in his concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* ("the unity of being") has had tremendous formative influence on the shape Sufism was to take from the 13th century onwards. *Waḥdat al-wujūd* has often been equated with metaphysical monism or pantheism by Ibn ʿArabī's commentators. However, his own perspective seems more nuanced; God is not identified substantially with His creation for He Himself transcends the very quality of substance, as, in fact, He transcends all categories.

In Ibn Arabī's scheme of things, creation results from God's longing to be known and loved and is thus a mirror of Himself. Yet, as existents, created realities are not identical with God but only reflections of His attributes. The intimacy between God and His creation is analogous to that between God and His creative spirit which He breathes forth. Or as ʿAbd Al-Karīm Al-Jīlī (†1428 C.E.), one of Ibn ʿArabī's later adherents, describes, the created universe is like ice and God is the water from which the ice is formed. Neither of these images should be seen as static but rather as dynamic processes. As breath is exhaled and inhaled, and as ice melts and reforms, so too does God continually create and annihilate, emanate forth and call back His creation to its transcendent origin.

There is, of course, much else that Ibn ʿArabī has contributed to the systematization of later Sufism. From the point of view of this study, however, Ibn ʿArabī's influence on the Iblīs tradition is closely linked to his metaphysical stance of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. The only true existent is God; although creation functions as His mirror, it still yearns to return to the source from which it sprung. At the end of time this reunification will be achieved. All the paradoxes and the tension of opposites that so characterize Sufi experience will be resolved. Heaven and Hell, reward and punishment, for example, will become empty concepts at the final return, for all will be One. So too the tragic conflict within Iblīs, the paradox of the condemned lover striving for vindication, loses much of its vigor as a symbol. From this perspective Iblīs, too, because of the overall metaphysical necessity of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and not because of his own struggle, is guaranteed rehabilitation at the final return.

The broad influence of Ibn ʿArabī on post 13th century Sufism can scarcely be overrated. It would not be accurate, however, to give the impression that Sufism becomes somehow a stagnant intellectual and religious movement after the classical period. This is far from the case. The role of the Sufi fraternities in the spread of Islam, the emergence of popular Sufi poetry and devotional literature in a wide variety of Islamic

languages, devotion to saints, pilgrimage, etc.—all testify to the vibrancy of Islamic mysticism in its various forms.

In the same way that Sufism does not stagnate after the classical period of development, the dynamism of the Iblīs motif cannot be restricted within the formative period of Sufism. The towering figure of Iblīs has played and will continue to play a role in the revitalization of Islamic religious culture. As Wilfred Cantwell Smith points out, our obligation as historians of religion is not to limit our quest only to the discovery of how something came to be, but also to follow closely its continued growth and development.

> By all means let us, with regard to anything, know how it became; but let us study further how and what it went on becoming. The study of history must be in large part the study of creativity.[18]

Even though this study of Iblīs deals only with the classical phases of the Iblīs tradition, it is important that it be seen as one small part in the larger effort to explore the impact of Iblīs on the whole of Islamic religious life, ranging from the classical Sufi tradition to the modern expressions of intellectual and religious creativity.

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[18] W. C. Smith, "The Study of Religion and the Study of the Bible," in *Religious Diversity: Essays by Wilfred Cantwell Smith*, ed. Willard Oxtoby (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 48.

CHAPTER ONE

MYTHIC BIOGRAPHY

A. *Origins and Life History*

1. *Iblīs: the Qurʾān and pre-Islamic sources*

The faith of Islam is founded on the divinely revealed Word of God, the Qurʾān; here, at the source of all Muslim piety, the believer encounters, perhaps for the first time, the figure of the Islamic devil, Iblīs (the Greek διάβολος). He is mentioned on nine specific occasions[1] in contexts which, for the most part, touch on two particular mythic events: Iblīs' confrontation with the newly created Adam, resulting in Iblīs' condemnation, and his revenge on mankind through the seduction of Adam and Eve.

A composite sketch of these myths as they appear whole or in part in various chapters of the Qurʾān would comprise the following elements. God forms Adam from clay and breathes into him a portion of His own spirit; thereupon, He orders the angels to bow before this unique creation. All obey except Iblīs who is convinced that his fiery essence raises him far above man, a creature of mere clay. For his refusal Iblīs is cursed by God and driven from the heavens. Henceforth, he will be an object of fear and derision, a "Stoned-Satan." Yet Iblīs is not to be dismissed so easily. He begs God for a respite from his punishment so that he can become the seducer of men, testing them to discover who are truly God's faithful ones. Iblīs' request is granted, with the understanding, however, that he cannot force the upright man or woman to sin; over them he has the power to invite but not to coerce.[2]

Adam and Eve are first to fall victim to Iblīs' wiles. After their creation God places them in Paradise where He provides for them abundantly. He denies them the produce of only one particular tree. But Iblīs comes with his satanic "whispers" (*waswasa*), promising Adam and Eve angelic status, even eternal life, if they eat; thus he causes them "to slip" from the path (*azallahumā*). When they eat from the forbidden tree their genitals are exposed and, in shame, they hurry to stitch together tree

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[1] Qurʾān 2:34, 7:11, 15:31-32, 17:61, 18:50, 20:116, 26:95, 34:20, and 38:74-75. The versification is that of the standard Egyptian edition.

[2] See Qurʾān 2:34, 7:11-18, 15:26-43, 17:61-65, 18:50, 20:116, 34:20-21, and 38:74-85.

leaves as clothing. From Paradise Adam and Eve are driven to earth, carrying with them the seeds of human aggression. Men will be enemies one to another, and Iblīs will be a manifest enemy to all.[3]

While the Qurʾānic references to Iblīs deal primarily with these two religious myths, it should not be assumed that these passages constitute the only Qurʾānic references to an Islamic devil figure. On the contrary, the name Ash-Shayṭān, Satan, appears more than fifty times in the text of the Qurʾān.[4] Within the two myths described above, the titles are virtually interchangeable, with the name Iblīs being used in the context of man's creation and the Devil's fall, while the title Ash-Shayṭān is reserved for the enticement of Adam and Eve.

The other instances of Ash-Shayṭān do not deal with any particular mythic structure. Rather the majority of cases touch on some aspect of Satan's involvement in man's spiritual life, an involvement foretold in the myth of his fall and concretized for the first time in the deception of Adam and Eve. Several particular satanic skills appear with a certain frequency in the Qurʾān text. Ash-Shayṭān, for example, is a master at embellishing the deeds of men, giving them false confidence in their own powers.[5] This and his other aims are achieved not through compulsion but by subtle suggestions and insinuations (*nazgh*, *waswasa*)[6] or by his inducing a state of forgetfulness in the mind of the believer.[7] Ash-Shayṭān promises nothing but empty illusions;[8] although he claims to be a faithful confidant, as soon as one submits, the Evil One is quit of him.[9]

"Follow not the footsteps of Satan," a Qurʾānic refrain counsels, "for he is truly your manifest enemy;"[10] companionship and intimacy with him lead only to disaster.[11] The Qurʾān instructs the faithful to seek refuge in God from the power of the Devil and his cohorts.[12] The prayer formula "I seek refuge in God from Satan the Stoned" has come down through the centuries of Islamic religious history as one of the most efficacious protections from the power of Iblīs/Ash-Shayṭān.

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[3] See Qurʾān 2:35-37, 7:19-24, and 20:117-122.

[4] Qurʾān 2:36, 168, 208, 268, 275; 3:36, 155, 175; 4:38, 60, 76, 83, 119, 120; 5:90, 91; 6:43, 68, 142; 7:20, 22, 27, 175, 200, 201; 8:11, 48; 12:5, 42, 100; 14:22; 16:63, 98; 17:27, 53, 64; 18:63; 19:44, 45; 20:120; 22:52, 53; 24:21; 25:29; 27:24; 28:15; 29:38; 31:21; 35:6; 36:60; 38:41; 41:36; 43:62; 47:25; 58:10; 59:16.

[5] See Qurʾān 6:43, 8:48, 16:63, 27:24, and 29:38.

[6] *Nazgh*: Qurʾān 7:200, 12:100, 17:53, 41:36. *Waswasa*: Qurʾān 7:20, 20:120.

[7] See Qurʾān 6:68, 12:42, 18:63, and 50:19.

[8] See Qurʾān 4:120 and 17:64. See also 2:268.

[9] See Qurʾān 7:21 and 59:16.

[10] Qurʾān 2:168, 2:208, 6:142. See also Qurʾān 7:22, 12:5, 17:53, 24:21, 28:15, 35:6, 36:60, and 43:62. All translations in this study have been done by the writer, except where specifically indicated.

[11] See Qurʾān 4:38 and 119.

[12] See Qurʾān 3:36, 7:200, 16:98, 23:97, and 41:36.

Any summary sketch of the figure of Iblīs/Ash-Shayṭān based on the Qurʾānic text should not be attempted in intellectual isolation from the broader religious milieu in which Islam developed. For the Qurʾān is understood by Muslims to be the culmination of God's revelation of His Word, supplanting and correcting both the Torah of the Jews and the Gospel of the Christians. The sacred books of these two communities, Muslims believe, have been corrupted by the adherents of these traditions. Consequently, it is only by studying the Torah and Gospel through the eyes of the Qurʾān that one comes to a true knowledge of the meaning of God's revelation.

Because of the continuity professed by the Muslim Community among Torah, Gospel, and Qurʾān, it is not at all strange to find resonances between the Qurʾānic Iblīs passages and particular pre-Islamic Jewish or Christian sources. One of the more striking parallels is found in the *Vita Adae et Evae*, a non-canonical Jewish work composed originally in Greek by Jewish Hellenists no later than the fourth century C.E. but most probably considerably earlier, possibly even in the first century C.E.[13] The passage of interest is preserved in a Latin version of the *Vita* which appears to combine the oldest Greek stratum with additional legends concerning Adam and Eve. It mirrors the Qurʾānic version of the confrontation of Iblīs with Adam in many important details.[14] When God breathes

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[13] R. H. Charles, ed. and tr., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913; reprint ed., 1969), vol. II—*Pseudepigrapha*, pp. 126-127.

[14] See Wilhelm Meyer, ed., "Vita Adae et Evae," *Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften: Philosophisch-philologische Classe* 14 (1878): 187-250. The passage under consideration is found on pp. 225-226, l. 70-93:

The Devil (*diabolus*) replied, 'Adam, what are you saying to me? It is on account of you that I have been cast down from there. When you were formed, I was cast out of God's presence and I was excluded from the company of the angels. When God breathed into you the spirit of life, and your face and likeness were made in the image of God, Michael led you forth and made us worship you in the sight of God.'

'The Lord said: "Behold Adam! I made you in Our image and likeness." And Michael went out and summoned all the angels, saying, "Worship the image of the Lord God as the Lord God prescribed!" Michael himself worshipped first, then he summoned me and said, "Worship the image of the God Jehova." I answered, "I am not obliged to worship Adam." When Michael kept pressing me to worship, I said to him, "Why do you press me? I will not worship my inferior and my junior. In creation I am his senior; before he was made, I had already been made. He ought to worship me!" '

'On hearing this the angels who were subject to me refused to worship him. And Michael said, "Worship the image of God. If you will not worship, the Lord God will be angry with you." And I said, "If He becomes angry with me, I will place my throne above the stars of heaven and I will be like the Most High." '

'And the Lord God was angry with me and He banished me together with my angels from our glory. It is on account of you we were expelled from our habitations and cast down to earth. Immediately we were grief stricken because we had been despoiled of such glory. And we were grieved to see you so enjoying your pleasures. And through deceit I

life into Adam He instructs the angel Michael to order all the angels to worship this creature newly formed in His image and likeness. The Devil (*diabolus*) refuses because he was created earlier and believes he deserves primacy over this late-comer. If God should become angry with his decision not to worship Adam, *diabolus* promises to set himself up as a rival to the Most High. God condemns the Devil for his pride and his disobedience; in revenge he seduces Adam and Eve since they were the cause of his downfall.[15]

An additional parallel text of pre-Islamic origin is found in the Christian apocryphal scriptures, namely in the *Gospel of St. Bartholomew* (also known as the *Questions of St. Bartholomew*). This work seems to date back to sometime in the fifth or late fourth century C.E.[16]

The passage pertinent to the Qurʾān material is extant in the Greek manuscript edited by Bonwetsch.[17] Its structure follows the general lines

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cheated your wife and caused you to be expelled through her from the pleasures you enjoyed, just as I was expelled from my glory.'

See also R. H. Charles for a translation of the extant Adam and Eve material collated from a number of manuscripts in various languages. "The Books of Adam and Eve" in *Pseudepigrapha*, pp. 134-154.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] For general discussions of the text as well as analyses of various manuscripts and fragments, see N. Bonwetsch, "Die apokryphen Fragen des Bartholomäus," *Nachrichten von der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen: Philologisch-historische Klasse* (1897): 1-42 and Eugène Tisserant and André Wilmart, "Fragments grecs et latins de l'évangile de Barthélemy," *Revue Biblique* N.S. X (1913): 161-190, 321-368. An English translation of the *Gospel of St. Bartholomew*, based on a number of manuscripts and fragments, can be found in Montague Rhodes James, *The Apocrypha of the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924; reprint ed., 1969), pp. 166-181.

[17] N. Bonwetsch, "Die apokryphen Fragen des Bartholomäus," pp. 25 l. 17-26 l. 16:

And the Devil said (to Bartholomew), 'Permit me to describe to you how I was hurled down here and how God made man. I was going round about in the cosmos when God said to Michael, "Fetch me a lump of earth from the four limits of the earth and water from the four rivers of Paradise." And when Michael brought them He formed Adam in the Eastern regions; He molded the shapeless lump, stretched sinews and veins, and put (him) together with joints. And He bowed down Himself (before him), He Himself, for His own sake, first. Because he (Adam) was an image of Himself, He bowed down.'

'And when I came from the limits of the earth, Michael said to me, "Bow down before the image of God, which He formed in His own likeness." But I replied, "I am fire from fire; I was the first angel formed. Am I about to bow down before clay and matter?" But Michael said to me, "Bow down, lest God grow angry with you." I said to him, "God will not grow angry with me, but I will place my throne over against His throne and I will be like Him." '

'Thereupon God grew angry with me and hurled me down, after having ordered the trap doors of the heavens opened. When I was hurled down, He questioned the six hundred angels who were subject to me whether they were willing to bow down. They replied, "As we have seen the first (of our number act), we will not bow down before our inferior." '

'Thereupon the six hundred were hurled down by Him with me. When we were hurled down upon the earth, we remained unconscious for forty years and when the sun shone seven times more brightly than fire, all of a sudden, I awakened. I looked around and saw

of the *Vita*, beginning with the Devil's description of how man was created. Once again the angel Michael is charged with seeing to it that God's newly created image is afforded proper worship. An important difference between the texts concerns who was the first to make obeisance to Adam; in the *Vita* it is Michael, in the *Gospel of St. Bartholomew* it is God Himself.

The Christian apocryphal text also adds an important detail not found in the *Vita*: the reason the Devil gives for his refusal is not simply the priority of his creation but also the fact that his essence is of fire while Adam's is composed of clay and matter. The consequences stemming from the Devil's refusal and his claim to possess equality with God are the same in both works: he is condemned by God and ejected from Paradise. Immediately he sets out to plot his revenge on man who was the cause of his condemnation.

The popularity of the apocryphal *Gospel of St. Bartholomew* is attested to by the manuscript tradition which spans several centuries. A much expanded Latin version, for example, is dated sometime in the eleventh century C.E. While the Latin is grammatically poor and the text greatly embellished, the passage relating to the fall of *diabolus* is surprisingly close to the original Greek.[18]

Far more difficult than pointing out textual similarities between the Qurʾānic Iblīs material and pre-Islamic Jewish and Christian sources is the attempt to isolate pre-Islamic religious ideas that may have influenced the Muslim understanding of the Devil. Such an inquiry, were it to be pursued in any depth, would require a monograph of its own; it is clearly beyond the scope of this study which will concentrate on specifically Sufi literature in the early and classical periods. Suffice is to say here that strands of the Iblīs tradition have much in common with pre-Islamic gnosticism.

One of the major Arabic sources dealing with Manichaean gnosticism, viz., the *Fihrist* of Ibn An-Nadīm (†995 C.E.), for example, actually calls the Manichaean Prince of Darkness by the name "The Ancient Iblīs" (Iblīs Al-Qadīm). To what extent the semantic identity points to a belief in an actual identity of meaning between the devil figures of these two

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the six hundred who were subject to me unconscious. And I awakened my son Salpsan and took him as adviser on how I might cheat man, for on account of him I was hurled down from the heavens. And thus did I devise: I took a vial in my hand and scraped the sweat from my chest and the hair of my armpits and washed in the springs of the water from where the four rivers flow. And Eve drank from it and she was overcome by desire. If she had not drunk the water, I would not have been able to cheat her.'

[18] Umberto Moricca, "Un nuovo testo dell'evangelo di Bartolomeo," *Revue Biblique* N.S. XXX (1921): 481-516; N.S. XXXI (1922): 20-30. The text of the Devil's fall is found on pp. 512-513.

traditions is not explicitated. However, it is not presumptuous to assume that Ibn An-Nadīm saw them to be closely associated in the roles they assumed in their respective traditions.[19] It should be noted that the Prince of Darkness was equated with a variety of devil figures by Manichaean missionaries, depending on which community was the object of their proselytizing.[20]

A thorough analysis of many facets of Islamic gnosis and its relationship to pre-Islamic gnostic systems is available in the extraordinary work of the late Henry Corbin.[21] The concern here is simply to acknowledge the central role Iblīs plays in the gnostic myths preserved in Islamic religious literature, especially that of the Ismāʿīlī Community.

In the elaborate myth of the disruption of the cosmic pleroma, Iblīs is equated in the Ismāʿīlī tradition with the evil imagination of the Third Intelligence (or Second Emanation) who is called Ādam Rūḥānī. He falls because of his ambition to attain equality with the Second Intelligence (or First Emanation); thus the drama of cosmic upheaval and gradual restoration is initiated.[22]

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[19] Ibn An-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, ed. Gustav Fluegel (reprint ed.; Beirut: Khayats, 1964), p. 329. Two other important Arabic commentators on Manichaeism, however, do not make the same semantic identification. Al-Bīrūnī (†1048 C.E.) speaks only of the principles of Light (An-Nūr) and Darkness (Aẓ-Ẓulma) as does Ash-Shahrastānī (†1153 C.E.). Yet Ash-Shahrastānī does speak of an Iblīs/Ash-Shayṭān figure in a different pre-Islamic context, viz., Zervanism. Here, Light (An-Nūr) or Ohrmazd (Hurmuz) is opposed to Darkness (Aẓ-Ẓulma) called Ahriman, Ash-Shayṭān, or Iblīs.

See: Abū ʾr-Rayḥān Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Al-Bīrūnī, *Al-Āthār al-bāqīya ʿan al-qurūn al-khālīya*, ed. Eduard Sachau (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1923), pp. 207-209 and Muḥammad Ash-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-milal wa 'n-niḥal*, ed. William Cureton (London, 1846; reprint ed., Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1923), pp. 183-185, 188-194.

[20] To the Christians he was known as Satanas or Daemon, Ahriman to the Zoroastrians, T'an-Mo (the Demon of Covetousness) in China, Šīmnu or Šamnu among the Ūïgurs. Moreover, the Greek, Syriac, and Latin sources speak of the personified principle of Evil as Matter (*hyle*) which seems to be the term Mani himself used. Other Iranian and Old Turkish documents describe this personified Matter as *Āz*, Concupiscience.

See Henri-Charles Puech, "Le prince des tenèbres en son royaume" in *Satan, Les études carmélitaines* (Brussels: Desclée de Brouwer, 1948), pp. 162-164 and Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), pp. 210-212.

[21] See Henry Corbin, "De la gnose antique à la gnose ismaélienne," *Convegno di scienze morali storiche e filologiche* (1956): 105-150; "Epiphanie divine et naissance spirituelle dans la gnose ismaélienne," *Eranos Jahrbuch* 23 (1954): 141-249; "Le temps cyclique dans le mazdéisme et dans l'ismaélisme," *Eranos Jahrbuch* 20 (1951): 149-217; "Herméneutique spirituelle comparée (I. Swedenborg—II. Gnose Ismaélienne)," *Eranos Jahrbuch* 33 (1964): 71-176; *Histoire de la philosophie islamique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964); *Trilogie ismaélienne* (Tehrān: Département d'Iranologie de l'Institut Franco-Iranien, 1961).

[22] See Bernard Lewis, "An Ismaili Interpretation of the Fall of Adam," *BSOAS* (1937-9): 691-704, especially p. 702 of the Arabic text; Husayn F. Al-Hamdani, "A Compendium of Ismāʿīlī Esoterics," *Islamic Culture* XI (1937): 210-220, especially pp. 214-215; Henry Corbin, *Trilogie ismaélienne*, pp. 135-137; "Le temps cyclique dans le mazdéisme et dans l'ismaélisme," pp. 192-204.

Iblīs is also a focal point in the gnostic myth of the fall of the earthly Adam. To grasp his significance, it is essential to be aware that basic to the Ismāʿīlī gnostic system is the notion of cyclic time. The present earthly age is one of many alternating cycles characterized by the primacy of exoteric or esoteric knowledge. In a cycle of *kashf*, revelation, the hidden Truth is manifest through the agency of the Imām whom Corbin describes as a "Divine Epiphany."

However, a cycle of manifestation is followed by a cycle of *satr*, occultation, where the exoteric law, the *sharīʿa*, once again holds sway and the hidden Truth remains inaccessible except to those adepts who pursue the arduous path to true Wisdom. The current cycle is an age of *satr* in which the exoteric law was reinstated by the earthly Adam.

Adam's authority comes from the fact that he is the son of the last Imām of the preceding cycle of *kashf*, Imām Hunayd, who appointed his son to restore the guidance of the *sharīʿa*. However, the angels who had known the glory of the previous cycle are loath to accept the confinement of this newly promulgated exoteric law. Iblīs, who, under the name of Ḥārith Ibn Murra, had been a great teacher and dignitary of the previous age, refuses to capitulate and is condemned.

The revenge of Iblīs upon Adam revolves again around the tension between *kashf* and *satr*, manifestation and occultation. The fallen Iblīs cajoles Adam into a fault of compassion: why must the people of this age remain in darkness about the ultimate Truth? Their needs are great and Adam, as son of the last Imām of the previous age of *kashf*, can attain this knowledge by eating of the forbidden tree. Adam is seduced; he eats and reveals the secret to an unworthy age.[23]

It will be seen in a later chapter of this study that the gnostic Iblīs clearly influenced aspects of the Sufi understanding of Iblīs and his role in the spiritual life. This appears clearly in the work of the thirteenth century mystical writer Farīd Ad-Dīn ʿAṭṭār. Nor is he an isolated case since his ideas are derived from an earlier Sufi master whom he cites.

2. *Iblīs: angel, jinn, ascetic*

The treatment of Iblīs in the text of the Qurʾān is of rather limited scope as has been seen. A certain amount of light has been shed on the roots of the Iblīs motif by pointing out its links with both pre-Islamic scriptures and religious concepts. Nevertheless, it is essential to explore other genres of Islamic religious literature to flesh out the general lines of

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[23] See Naṣīr Ad-Dīn Ṭūsī, *Rawdat at-taslīm (Taṣawwurāt)*, ed. and tr. W. Ivanow (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1950), pp. 56-63 of the Persian text; Henry Corbin, "Epiphanie divine et naissance spirituelle dans la gnose ismaélienne," pp. 169-171.

the mythic biography of the Muslim Devil. Only by grasping his significance in the general framework of Islamic life can one appreciate the creativity with which the Sufis have molded their particular Iblīs symbology.

The three major genres of literature to be considered in this Chapter are Qurʾān commentaries, collections of prophetic stories, and the tradition literature, or *ḥadīth*. The first two will be dealt with together while the *ḥadīth* will be treated alone. Even though much of the *ḥadīth* are chronologically prior to the Qurʾān commentaries and compendia of prophetic fables, it appears best to complete the discussion of Qurʾān related materials, returning to the *ḥadīth* in the second half of the Chapter.

The aim of this examination of selected commentaries and prophetic tales is to explore the main elements of the Iblīs myth as it was elaborated, analyzed, and used for didactic purposes by Islamic religious authors. The commentaries and collections of prophetic stories consulted span a period ranging from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries C.E. The purpose is not to present a chronological development of the myth but to organize the basic elements that have become part of Iblīs' mythic biography and to comment upon the major theological issues that discussions of the figure of Iblīs reflect.

The name of the Devil, the commentaries explain, was not always Iblīs; throughout the countless ages of mythic time preceding his sin he was called ʿAzāzīl,[24] less often Ḥārith.[25] Of the spirits who inhabited the earth, ʿAzāzīl was among the most industrious and dedicated, a being renowned for insight and learning.[26]

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[24] Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 30 vols. (Cairo: Al-Maṭbaʿat al-yamanīya, 1321 A.H.), 1:173, 15:157; Abū ʿAlī Al-Faḍl Ibn Al-Ḥasan Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān fī tafsīr Al-Qurʾān*, 4 vols. (Saida: Maṭbaʿat al ʿirfān, 1353-1355 A.H.), 1:83; Ḥusayn Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Al-Ḥasan Ad-Diyārbakrī, *Taʾrīkh al-khamīs fī anfus nafīs*, 2 vols. (Cairo: n.p., 1283 A.H.-1866 C.E.), 1:33.

[25] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:173, 1:175, 15:157; Ad-Diyārbakrī, *Taʾrīkh al-khamīs*, 1:33.

[26] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:173, 15:157; Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 1:83.

In the *Book of Leviticus*, Azāzēl is the name of a malevolent spirit who lives in the lifeless desert regions. The Leviticus text speaks of the selection of two goats by Aaron, one for Yahweh and one for Azāzēl: "...the goat on which the lot fell for Azāzēl shall be presented alive before the Lord to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azāzēl" (Leviticus 16:10).

Material more pertinent to the Islamic use of the title is found in the Jewish *Book of Enoch*, a non-canonical, originally Aramaic and Hebrew, composition which took shape during the two centuries preceding the Christian era. Enoch presents a well developed angelology in which Azāzēl is identified as a prominent angelic figure who falls from grace.

For the complete translation of Enoch, see R. H. Charles, ed. and tr., "The Book of Enoch," in *Pseudepigrapha*, pp. 163-277. Several passages from Charles' translation are particularly pertinent:

No Muslim questions the spirituality of Iblīs' nature; only the precise definition of the family of spirits to which Iblīs belongs is problematical. In this respect the Qurʾān is not as precise as one might hope. While Iblīs is closely linked with the angels in those Qurʾānic verses where he is named, he himself is never called an angel, and his sin, his refusal to bow before Adam, sets him apart in dramatic fashion from all other angelic beings. Moreover, one Qurʾānic verse describes Iblīs as a "*jinn*": "And behold we said to the angels: 'Bow before Adam' And they bowed—except Iblīs who was from among the *jinn*" (18:50).

This verse raises more problems than it solves, because it does not clearly describe the nature of the *jinn*. It leaves open the question whether they are angels or a different type of spirit altogether. If they are different, what is their relation to the angels?

A strain of opinion affirming Iblīs' angelic nature is clearly discernible among those commentators who interpret the Qurʾānic statement "he was from among the *jinn*" as pointing to the particular tribe or clan of angels to which Iblīs belongs. There need be no question of a less than angelic status for the *jinn*, and therefore for Iblīs.[27] On the contrary, the *jinn*, and Iblīs in particular, are angels entrusted with significant cosmic tasks; they are guardians (*khazana*) of Paradise (*al-janna* or *al-jinān*).[28] It is this link with Paradise that may account for the derivation of their clan name, *al-jinn*.[29] In addition, Iblīs himself is placed in charge of all that is between heaven and earth. As sole master of the *samāʾ ad-dunyā*, as well as of the earth and all the spirits found therein, he is a being without peer. In the power and majesty of this, his unique position, Iblīs' pride is born.[30]

"Thou seest what Azāzēl hath done, who hath taught all unrighteousness on earth and revealed the eternal secrets which were (preserved) in heaven, which men were striving to learn" (9:6).

"And again the Lord said to Raphael, 'Bind Azāzēl hand and foot, and cast him into the darkness: and make an opening in the desert, which is in Dudāēl, and cast him therein. And place upon him rough and jagged rocks, and cover him with darkness, and let him abide there for ever, and cover his face that he may not see light. And on the day of the great judgement he shall be cast into the fire.... And the whole earth has been corrupted through the works that were taught by Azāzēl: to him ascribe all sin' " (10:4-6, 8).

"And Enoch went and said, 'Azāzēl, thou shalt have no peace: a severe sentence has gone forth against thee to put thee in bonds...' " (13:1).

"And I asked the angel of peace who went with me, saying, 'For whom are these chains being prepared?' And he said unto me, 'These are being prepared for the hosts of Azāzēl, so that they may take them and cast them into the abyss of complete condemnation...' " (54:4-5).

[27] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:173-174, 15:157-158; Ad-Diyārbakrī, *Taʾrīkh al-khamīs*, 1:33.

[28] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:173, 15:157-158; Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 1:82.

[29] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:173, 15:157-158.

[30] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:173-174, 15:157-158; Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 1:82.

Those Muslim commentators who doubt Iblīs' angelic status insist that the verse "he was from among the *jinn*" has far more significance than simply as an indication of Iblīs' tribal affiliation. It points to an essential difference between Iblīs and the angels who are ordered to bow before Adam. The *jinn* are as different from angels as they are different from men,[31] and Iblīs' own origin must be traced to this species of inferior spirits called *jinn*.[32]

Perhaps the simplest and most persuasive argument against Iblīs' angelic status is expressed by Al-Bayḍāwī and others when they assert that angels by their very nature can never sin.[33] As the Torah affirms, angels are messengers, punishers, couriers, helpers: they act only in accordance with God's will, and function as His instruments. For them to rebel is unimaginable, and, in fact, impossible; on this point Muslim and Jewish angelology are in accord.[34] Iblīs' refusal to obey God's command is proof positive that he is no angel: "They (the angels) do not disobey what God orders them; they do what they are commanded" (Qurʾān 66:6).

How then did Iblīs find himself among the angels at the time when God created Adam? A number of Muslim commentators tell of a violent battle that took place during Iblīs' childhood between the angels and the *jinn*, the family of Iblīs. During the mêlée Iblīs was carried off as a captive by the angelic hosts, and he grew up among them. As time passed his non-angelic origin was forgotten, although God knew his true nature. Not only did Iblīs live and pray with the angels, but he also assumed important angelic roles as guardian-treasurer (*khāzin*) of Paradise and master of the heavens. Only at the critical point of Adam's creation did God reveal Iblīs to be a *jinn*. His arrogant disobedience jarred the memory of his angelic confrères and the true nature of Iblīs was recognized.[35]

Equally detestable as Iblīs' refusal is his blatant carnality. In contrast to the spiritual purity and detachment of angelic spirits, Iblīs is filled with passionate desire, and from this lust springs his progeny: "Do you

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[31] Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaᶜ al-bayān*, 3:475.

[32] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:174.

[33] Nāṣir Ad-Dīn Abū Saᶜīd ᶜAbd Allāh Ibn ᶜUmar Ibn Muḥammad Ash-Shīrāzī Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl wa asrār at-taʾwīl*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Muṣṭafā 'l-Bābī Al-Ḥalabī wa awlāduh, 1344 A.H.), 2:300; Ad-Diyārbakrī, *Taʾrīkh al-khamīs*, 1:31-32.

[34] Rabbi Leo Jung, *Fallen Angels in Jewish, Christian and Mohammedan Literature* (Dropsie College, 1926; reprint ed., New York: KTAV, 1974). Chapters one through four present an adequate discussion of the roles of angels in the three traditions.

[35] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:174, 15:158; Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaᶜ al-bayān*, 1:82-83; Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, 1:17-18.

(Adam) take him (Iblīs) and his offspring to be your protectors instead of Me?'' (Qurʾān 18:50). His children are the armies of devils who roam creation fomenting evil, and they stand forth as living witnesses to Iblīs' radical difference from the angels.[36]

In four points Aṭ-Ṭabarsī summarizes the argumentation in favor of a non-angelic origin for Iblīs: 1) when the Qurʾān speaks of *jinn* it seems to be referring to a clearly distinguishable class of spirits, and not simply to a tribal distinction; 2) angels by their very nature are incapable of sin; 3) Iblīs possesses progeny and offspring, physically fathering the *jinn* in the same way that Adam has fathered mankind. Iblīs is created of fire; the angels are spirits and created of wind, some say of light. Angels neither beget, nor eat, nor drink; 4) ''Praise to God...who will make the angels messengers'' (Qurʾān 35:1). God would not make His messengers unbelieving or depraved, for then they would lie and pervert His revelation.[37]

The arguments offered in rebuttal to these points, i.e., the reassertions of Iblīs' angelic status, emphasize anew the critical significance of Iblīs' actually being among the angels at the time when they were ordered to bow before Adam.[38] Had he not been one of them, he would neither have been ordered to bow,[39] nor would he have been held accountable for his refusal; the order included the angels and no others.[40] Despite the evidence to the contrary, therefore, Iblīs may actually be an angel.

Nor should his ability to beget offspring be automatically a sign of his perversity or base nature. It is possible, as some claim, that there is a particular species of angel that is capable of reproducing. These are the angels known as *jinn* and Iblīs is one of them.[41]

Even Iblīs' sinful rejection of God's command is not seen as an unimpeachable sign of his less than angelic status. Why is it not possible to have an angel who sins, even though the majority be sinless? Is it not imaginable that there be a sinless man, even though we know that the majority of men are sinners?[42]

It is again in Aṭ-Ṭabarsī's *Majmaᶜ al-bayān* that the rebuttal arguments are summarized: 1) the *jinn* are a species or tribe of angels and are not of

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[36] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:174; Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaᶜ al-bayān*, 1:82; Jalāl Ad-Dīn ᶜAbd Ar-Raḥmān Ibn Abī Bakr As-Suyūṭī and Jalāl Ad-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Al-Maḥallī, *Tafsīr al-imāmayn al-jalālayn*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Muṣṭafā ʾl-Bābī Al-Ḥalabī wa awlāduh, 1352 A.H.-1934 C.E.), 2:9.

[37] Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaᶜ al-bayān*, 1:82.

[38] See Qurʾān 2:34, 7:11, 15:31, 17:61, 18:50, 20:116, and 38:74.

[39] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:173, 15:157-158; Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, 1:17.

[40] Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaᶜ al-bayān*, 1:82.

[41] Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, 1:17; Ad-Diyārbakrī, *Taʾrīkh al-khamīs*, 1:32.

[42] Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, 1:18.

a different nature. Why are they called *jinn*? It is because they are hidden (*ijtanna*) from the eyes of men; 2) impeccability should not be attributed to all angels, for that is the particular virtue only of the guardian-treasurers (*khazana*) of the sun and moon (*nayyirān*). The *khazana* of Paradise, Iblīs included, are thus capable of sin; 3) the objection that *jinn* are distinct because they are created from fire, whereas angels are spiritual beings created from wind or light, is not fully justified. No one disputes that angels are created of light; however the difference between fire and light is negligible, if there is any essential difference at all. In the same way, the evidence for the claim that *jinn* eat and drink is not conclusive. There is contrary evidence indicating that they are spiritual beings who at best have the ability to smell, but not to eat or drink; 4) and finally, the argument based on God's choosing angels to be His messengers (Qurʾān 35:1) is not wholly accurate, for another verse of the Word of God reads: "God chooses messengers from among the angels and from among men" (Qurʾān 22:75). To conclude that those particular angels and men whom God elects as messengers are truthful and obedient is in accord with revelation. However, to assert that the messengerhood of a few men and angels implies the necessary impeccability of all is beyond reason. The history of man is proof.[43]

The lengthy but inconclusive debate over Iblīs' essential nature, so prominent in the works examined thus far, yields its place to other concerns in later works, especially in the historical treatise of the sixteenth-century writer Ad-Diyārbakrī (†1574). No longer is the emphasis focused on Iblīs' majesty and cosmic power; of equal significance is his interior life of faith. Iblīs is not only the guardian and treasurer of Paradise, master of the heavens and earth, but he is also the experienced worshipper and ardent devotee of God's unity.

Two myths related by Ad-Diyārbakrī describe Iblīs' early life in terms of a gradual movement from the lowest to the highest levels of cosmic existence. The unfolding of these various stages in his life represents an allegorical description of the Sufi Path.

In the first myth, God creates Iblīs and places him beneath the seven earths. He progresses from the seventh to the first earth by dint of thousands of years of uninterrupted worship. Yet his journey is not complete. From the first earth he is raised to the first heaven, the *samāʾ ad-dunyā*, where he discovers six other heavens through which he must pass. Again thousands of years are required for further growth in perfection and worship. At the end of his arduous journey lie the Throne of God and the fulfillment of the mystical life.[44]

[43] Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 1:83.

[44] Ad-Diyārbakrī, *Taʾrīkh al-khamīs*, 1:51.

The second myth of ascent sets off Iblīs' interior perfection in even starker relief. After creating the *jinn*, God assigns them to the earth where desire and passion overcome them and they beget offspring. The *jinn* and their progeny are grasping, envious, and combative creatures whose lives are busied in the pursuit of all that is forbidden. God in His mercy sends them messengers and prophets in hope of turning them from evil, but the *jinn* refuse. Among this mass of perfidious *jinn* lives one renowned ascetic (*zāhid*) named ʿAzāzīl. Unable to stand the corruption of his peers, he withdraws to a high mountain where he establishes a hermitage. There, set apart from the evil of the world, he dedicates his life to the worship of the One God.

Soon the angels of the first heaven take notice of him and beg the Lord God to raise ʿAzāzīl to the *samāʾ ad-dunyā* so that they might rejoice in his sight. God raises him up and ʿAzāzīl proceeds to outdo his fellow inhabitants of the first heaven in worship. The angels of the second heaven marvel at his holiness and beg that ʿAzāzīl be allowed to live among them. Again he is raised and outdistances his fellows in devotion. And so ʿAzāzīl moves from heaven to heaven, until God raises him to the Throne itself.

As time passes, ʿAzāzīl becomes an intimate of the bearers of the Throne and the angelic beings who ceaselessly fly about the Throne. He is so esteemed by them that he is granted the guardianship of the treasury of the Throne; the key to Paradise is entrusted to his safekeeping. As ʿAzāzīl flies through the heavens, the hosts of angels cry out in wonder: "O treasurer of Paradise! O guardian of the people of divine worship!"[45]

Lest the listener, too, be overcome with awe of Iblīs, Ad-Diyārbakrī appends a caveat to the myth, a foreshadowing of ʿAzāzīl's tragic demise: "Do not be misled by his piety! Under every pious deed is evil. Do not put your trust in his obedience! In every obedient act is ruin."[46]

The ambiguity and controversy surrounding Iblīs' origin carries over into the description of the *jinn* in the Islamic tradition. It is not adequate for the Muslim commentators simply to acknowledge their existence, for the *jinn* represent the family clan of Iblīs, and, as such, are not to be passed over lightly. It is in this particular context of their relationship to Iblīs that they are of interest here.

The *jinn* are generally believed to be spiritual beings, part of the world of the unseen. This invisibility and concealment (expressed by the root JNN in Arabic) may be the fundamental concept from which their name,

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[45] *Ibid.*, 1:32-33.
[46] *Ibid.*, 1:33.

jinn, is derived.[47] The *jinn* were created thousands of years before man.[48] Many consider them to be a species or tribe of angels[49] and so they would have been created at the same time as the rest of the angels. *Jinn* are not uniform in character; there are significant differences among them. Some eat, drink, have children and die; however, pure ones are wind and do not.[50] Some have wings; others take on animal shapes.[51]

Some commentators would claim that Iblīs is not simply a member of the race of *jinn*, but that he is its originator, the father of the *jinn* in the way that Adam is the father of mankind. In this role he is occasionally named Al-Jānn.[52] Iblīs and his offspring were created from a substance usually called *nār as-samūm*. This *nār as-samūm* (or *mārij min nār* as it is sometimes described)[53] is explained in a variety of ways. For some it is the fierce heat of a smokeless fire, a heat that penetrates the pores. It is also the substance from which lightning bolts are produced.[54] Aṭ-Ṭabarī suggests that the name *samūm* alludes to the hot winds that blow at night. Perhaps the *nār as-samūm* is, therefore, a blazing hot wind, or whirlwind capable of stifling a person. Aṭ-Ṭabarī also indicates that *nār as-samūm* may, after all, be the heart of a fire's flame and not a wind.[55] The several versions, however, agree on the violent heat and immaterial quality of this creative substance, *nār as-samūm*.

The creation of the *jinn* from *nār as-samūm* was not an event that occurred once and never again, since they continue to reproduce among themselves. Iblīs is, therefore, their father in a physical as well as spiritual sense. Aṭ-Ṭabarī reports from Ibn Zayd that God said to Iblīs: "I will not provide Adam with offspring without having provided the same for you. No son of man exists who does not have a *shayṭān* (satan) who is yoked together with him."[56]

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[47] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr* 1:174. See above, p. 26 for another opinion on the derivation of the name.

[48] Abū ʾl-Fidāʾ Ismāʿīl Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd Al-Wāḥid, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār at-taʾlīf, 1388 A.H.-1968 C.E.), 1:6.

[49] As-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-jalālayn*, 2:9; Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 3:475.

[50] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 14:19.

[51] Ad-Diyārbakrī, *Taʾrīkh al-khamīs*, 1:32.

[52] As-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-jalālayn*, 1:10, 1:176, 1:295, 1:296, 2:35, 2:194; Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:174, 14:19; Ad-Diyārbakrī, *Taʾrīkh al-khamīs*, 1:32; Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 3:335.

[53] Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, 1:18, 1:264; Ad-Diyārbakrī, *Taʾrīkh al-khamīs*, 1:32; Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:174, 14:19; Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 3:335. See also Qurʾān 15:27, 55:15.

[54] Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 3:335; As-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-jalālayn*, 1:295; Ad-Diyārbakrī, *Taʾrīkh al-khamīs*, 1:32; Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, 1:264.

[55] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 14:19.

[56] *Ibid.*, 15:159. See also pp. 46-48 for a fuller discussion of each man's companion spirit.

Iblīs, however, does not beget progeny in the manner of humankind. Two hypotheses are offered, and, in both, the generative power of Iblīs is vastly different from human maleness. In one strain of the tradition Iblīs brings forth of his own accord, in the manner of a true hermaphrodite who possesses both male and female generative organs.[57] In another strain he produces eggs from which his children hatch.[58] A third hypothesis proposes to find a mate for Iblīs by suggesting that he eventually impregnated the serpent of Paradise who is his co-conspirator in the seduction of Adam and Eve.[59]

The offspring brought forth by Iblīs are not limited to those spirits called *jinn* but also include those called *shayāṭīn*, satans or devils.[60] Chief among them are a group of five whose mischief and mayhem touch all facets of life. First is Zalanbūr who takes charge of all bazaar streets and markets, wherever they may be. The next is Thabr who delights in calamity and misfortune. Hard on his heels appears Al-Aʿwar to lure the faithful into adultery, while the task of Miswaṭ is to fill people's mouths and ears with gossip and tall tales. Finally it is Dāsim who patiently waits for a Muslim to forget to mention God's name on entering his house or before eating. Thereupon Dāsim invades the premises and appropriates the forgetful Muslim's provisions.[61]

The Qurʾān speaks not only of Iblīs' physical progeny (*dhurrīya*) but also of those armies of followers who look on him as master.[62] He may not be their father in a physical sense, but he is their spiritual leader and guide, whose command they obey and whose word they revere as law. Any being—man, woman, *jinn*, *shayṭān*—willing to pledge him allegiance is acceptable.[63] The characteristics of Iblīs' followers are insolence and wantonness; no gross or arrogant deed is beyond their ken. They even vie with their master for primacy in evil:

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[57] Ad-Diyārbakrī, *Taʾrīkh al-khamīs*, 1:32.

[58] *Ibid.*; Abū Isḥāq Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ibrāhīm An-Nīsābūrī Ath-Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ al-musammā ʿarāʾis al-majālis* (n.p.: Dār iḥyāʾ al-kutub al-ʿarabīya, n.d.), p. 36.

[59] Ath-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-majālis*, p. 36.

[60] Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 3:476.

[61] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 15:159. The voweling of these names is indicated by Fritz Meier in a note of his work on Najm Ad-Dīn Al-Kubrā. See Najm Ad-Dīn Al-Kubrā, *Die fawāʾiḥ al-ǧamāl wa fawātiḥ al-ǧalāl des Naǧmuddīn al-Kubrā*, edited with a commentary by Fritz Meier (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1957), p. 136, note 5. Hammer-Purgstall, in his work on Muslim spirits, mentions only one of the above names, Miswaṭ. However, he vowels it as Misweṭ. See Josef Hammer-Purgstall, *Zwei Abhandlungen zur Mystik und Magie von Josef Hammer-Purgstall*, with introduction and notes by Annemarie Schimmel (Vienna: Österreichische Academie der Wissenschaften, 1974), p. 154.

[62] See Qurʾān 26:92-95.

[63] As-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-jalālayn*, 2:94; Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 19:51; Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 4:194.

I was a fellow in Iblīs' gang;
but I made such progress that he ended up in mine![64]

Thus, through diligent persistence, his followers perfect their skill in sin and corruption.

3. *Iblīs: the confrontation with Adam*

> And behold your Lord said to the angels, 'I am going to create man from clay. And when I have formed him and breathed into him some of My spirit, then fall down before him, bowing.'
> And the angels bowed, all of them together—except Iblīs. He was puffed up with pride and was one of the unbelievers. He (God) said, 'O Iblīs, what prevented your bowing to the one I created with My own hands? Was your pride too much for you? Or were you one of the high and mighty?' He (Iblīs) said, 'I am better than he! Me You created from fire, him You created from clay.' He (God) said, 'Be gone from this place! For you are stoned. Truly My curse rests upon you until the Day of Judgement.'
> He (Iblīs) said, 'My Lord, grant me respite until the day when they will be raised up again.'
> He (God) said, 'You will be among those granted respite until the day of that time already appointed.'
> He (Iblīs) said, 'By Your power, I will surely seduce them all, except for those of Your servants who are pure in heart.'
> He (God) said, 'Truly, truly, I say to you: I will surely fill Hell with you and with whoever among them follows you, all together' (Qurʾān 38:71-85).

In the Muslim creation myth, the week of creation began on Sunday and reached its culmination on Friday. The most important of God's handiworks—Adam—was brought into being the last hour of Friday,[65] whereas, on the previous day, the heavens, the angels, and Paradise had been created.[66] Adam's body was shaped from clay collected at the extremities of the Muslim world—Egypt, Yemen, the Ḥijāz, the far lands of East and West—as well as from its life center, the Kaʿba.[67]

The Lord God proudly stations His finest creation at the gate of Paradise so that all the angels can come to marvel at this wonder never seen before in the universe.[68] Ibn Kathīr and Ath-Thaʿlabī vividly describe the scene:

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[64] Abū Manṣūr ʿAbd Al-Malik Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ismāʿīl Ath-Thaʿālibī An-Nīsābūrī, *Thimār al-qulūb fī ʾl-muḍāf al-mansūb*, ed. Muḥammad Abū ʾl-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār nahḍat Miṣr li ʾṭ-ṭabʿ wa ʾn-nashr, 1384 A.H.-1965 C.E.), p. 69.

[65] Ad-Diyārbakrī, *Taʾrīkh al-khamīs*, 1:31; Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, 1:53.

[66] Ath-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-majālis*, p. 12; Ad-Diyārbakrī, *Taʾrīkh al-khamīs*, 1:31. On the same page Ad-Diyārbakrī recounts a tradition that alters the creation chronology. It locates the creation of the heavens on Thursday and leaves the creation of the angels, as well as the sun, moon, and stars, until Friday. Yet man is always mentioned as the last of God's handiworks.

[67] Ath-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-majālis*, p. 23.

[68] *Ibid.*

> And so the angels passed by him. When they looked upon him they were terrified. Of all of them Iblīs was the most frightened. Iblīs kept walking around him and striking him. The body made sounds like a clay pot.[69]
>
> And Iblīs said, 'You were created for some reason or other.' He struck him with his hand. He seemed hollow! Iblīs entered him through the mouth and exited by his rear. He said to his comrades, the angels who were with him, 'This is a hollow creature. It is neither strong nor firmly connected.'
> Then Iblīs said to them, 'Did you notice that He gave preference to *this* over you? So what are you going to do about it?' They answered, 'We will obey our Lord.' Iblīs said to himself, 'By God, truly if He has given preference to this thing over me, I surely will defy Him. And if I am set above him, then I will destroy him.'[70]

Iblīs' rejection of God's command puts him squarely in the camp of the *kāfirūn*, the hypocrites and dissimulators whose concern for self-aggrandizement blinds theirs hearts to the Lord's Word.[71] Iblīs' cry "*Ana khayrun minhu*" ("I am better than he!") echoes through the ages of creation as the paradigmatic expression of arrogant pride.[72] His haughtiness and disdain in the face of the newly created Adam are recalled by the Lord God in His Holy Qurʾān as a "sign" to the people of the prophet Muḥammad's age. For the fate of Iblīs, his condemnation and eventual destruction, is the same fate the Lord prepared for the *mushrikūn* (associationists) of Makka and the Jewish tribes who sneered at Muḥammad and scorned his message.[73]

"I am better than he! Me You created from fire; him You created from clay" (Qurʾān 7:12).[74] Iblīs' pride and arrogance spring from this belief in the superiority of his created essence over that of Adam. Fire seems both more noble and more powerful than the clay of man; in fact, fire can obliterate clay entirely in the scorching heat of its flames.[75] There is no

[69] Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, 1:40.

[70] Ath-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-majālis*, p. 23.

There is a debate among the commentators over exactly which angels were ordered to bow. This controversy seems to be an offshoot of the discussion centering on Iblīs' ontological status. Ath-Thaʿlabī would restrict the group to only those angels who were with Iblīs (see *ʿArāʾis al-majālis*, p. 25). Ad-Diyārbakrī tends to agree, and locates these angels among the inhabitants of earth (as does Aṭ-Ṭabarī in *Tafsīr*, 8:90). They had previously been used by God to purge the earth of the wayward *jinn* (see *Taʾrīkh al-khamīs*, 1:43). Aṭ-Ṭabarsī repeats this same opinion; however, he also recognizes that there is substantial weight to the argument that all the angels of the cosmos were ordered to bow (see *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 1:81). Ibn Kathīr throws up his hands in frustration. The testimony, he asserts, is clearly at odds with itself. Only God knows whether all were ordered to bow or just Iblīs' coterie (see *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, 1:12).

[71] Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, 1:17, 2:458.

[72] Qurʾān 7:12, 38:76.

[73] Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, 2:458; Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:175, 23:107.

[74] See also Qurʾān 38:76. Similar, though not identical, verses are found in Qurʾān 15:33 and 17:61. Both refer to man's having been created from the clay of the earth.

[75] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 8:90, 14:20; Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 1:82, 4:486; Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, 1:265.

doubt in Iblīs' mind that he, the superior being (*fāḍil*), should, therefore, never bow before this weakling who has, for the moment, incurred God's favor and grace (*mafḍūl*).[76]

In arriving at this conclusion Iblīs avails himself of a tool of reasoning known as *qiyās*, analogy.[77] The Qurʾān commentators, in linking Iblīs and *qiyās*, reflect the broader Islamic concern, evident from the formative period to the present day, with defining the power of human reason. Can man attain truth through his own power or is all truth contained in the revelation? More to the point, what was the early Muslim Community to do when it faced problems whose solutions were not readily accessible through consulting the Qurʾān or examining the *sunna* of the Prophet?

Some, like the Muʿtazilites, opted for giving full rein to man's reasoning power, *naẓar*, and to *qiyās*.[78] Others, like the Ẓāhirīs, rejected the efficacy of independent human reason totally, insisting that analogy was worthless in questions of religious truth.[79] To rely on human reason alone is to place man's feeble powers on a par with the divinely revealed Qurʾān and the traditions of the Prophet.

A more moderate position was offered by the legist Ash-Shāfiʿī (†820 C.E.) who succeeded in establishing *qiyās* as an important tool for the development of Islamic legal theory. Clearly Ash-Shāfiʿī does not place analogical reasoning on a par with Qurʾān and *sunna*; nevertheless, he recognizes it as a necessary means in particular cases for arriving at answers to thorny religious problems.[80]

The principles developed by legal scholars like Ash-Shāfiʿī became a rich source of methodology for the philosopher-theologians of Islam.[81] The influence these principles wielded was not, therefore, confined to one religious discipline. Iblīs' link with *qiyās* is a sign, however, that analogical reasoning, or any other method of using human reason to address questions of religious truth, is fraught with danger. True, there are times when it must be used, but one must beware lest he overstep the limits. The case of Iblīs remains for the Muslim commentators the prime

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[76] Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, 1:153; Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 1:81.

[77] *Qiyās* is a derivative of the Jewish exegetical term *hiqqīsh*, one of whose meanings Schacht, relying on Bacher, describes as "a conclusion by analogy, based on the occurrence of an essential common feature in the original and in the parallel case." See Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 99.

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 128.

[79] See Joseph Schacht, *Introduction to Islamic Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), pp. 63-64.

[80] Joseph Schacht, *Origins*, p. 122.

[81] See Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalām* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 7. Wolfson provides a fine historical overview of the adaptation and integration of *qiyās* in the work of the early scholars of *Kalām*. See pp. 1-43.

example of the limitations and ultimate unreliability of human intellection.

After scrutinizing himself and Adam, Iblīs inferred by analogy that he must be the superior being since fire appears superior to clay. He concluded that he could not legitimately be obliged to bow before this inferior, God's order notwithstanding. Through this reasoning process Iblīs becomes the first creature to leap headlong into the abyss of *qiyās*. His analogy and its seemingly logical conclusion hardened his heart to God's command and lured him to his own destruction.[82]

By seeing only his more noble, physical origin, Iblīs mistook the part for the whole; this external preeminence appeared to him to be the sole criterion on which he and Adam would be judged. Iblīs overlooked both the spirit that God had breathed into Adam and Adam's depth of knowledge, his two unique attributes. Was it not Adam who taught the angels the names of all created things?[83]

The superiority that Iblīs perceives in himself is an external one. He is unaware that in the mind of God true nobility is an interior quality, a quality linked closely to a being's perfection of faith and dedication to good works.[84] It is even debatable whether this apparent external superiority holds up under close scrutiny. While it is true that fire can consume clay, it is of equal significance that clay is an essential, dynamic component of creation. Is not the earth, the home of mankind and the source of mankind's continued life, made of clay?[85]

Ibn Kathīr and Aṭ-Ṭabarī further advance this argument for clay's superiority by detailing a comparative analysis of the particular qualities of both clay and fire. Clay is characterized by stability, composure, perseverance, gentleness, and the like. Fire, on the other hand, is fickle, restless, volatile, and hasty; it breeds destruction and ruin.[86] Thus the feebleness of Iblīs' *qiyās* is laid bare, a warning to all who would place their faith in the workings of reason rather than in the will of God.

A composite sketch of Iblīs' confrontation with Adam is included in various sections of the sixteenth-century history of Ad-Diyārbakrī. It serves as an excellent dramatic summary of the elements that comprise the encounter of Iblīs and Adam, for Ad-Diyārbakrī weaves both the Qurʾānic and the oral traditions into one literary fabric. Striking, too, is Ad-Diyārbakrī's description of Iblīs in Sufi terms. Iblīs is the holy ascetic, *zāhid*, who struggles from the lowest to the highest levels of divine

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[82] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 8:90; Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, 1:8.
[83] Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, 1:153.
[84] Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 3:335-336.
[85] *Ibid.*, 2:402.
[86] Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, 1:9; Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 8:89.

presence. This lengthy passage describing Iblīs' cosmic and quasi-mystical ascent from the lower to the higher heavens has been more fully delineated above.[87] As a result of thousands of years of worship Iblīs achieves proximity to the Divine Throne where he worships as one of the select few brought near by God. There seems to remain no measured place in the heavens or on the earth where Iblīs has not bowed to his Lord.

> 'My God, does there remain a place in which I have not bowed?' He (God) answered, 'Yes, the place is on earth. Hurry down there.' Iblīs descended down, and said, 'What is he?' He replied, 'That is Adam. Bow down before him!' He (Iblīs) asked, 'Does there remain a place other than Adam?' He answered, 'No.' He (Iblīs) said, 'Do not order me to bow before him! You have given him preference over me.' He said, 'I am the one who is free to choose. I do what I will. Do not question what I do.' The angels were terrified when they heard this. They shuddered and trembled with fear. It is said that Iblīs perceived Adam to be made of molded clay which had originated from between Tā'if and Makka. Iblīs puffed himself up in grandiose fashion because of his own graceful adornments. He scorned Adam because of his clay substance.[88]

> He (Iblīs) would not face Adam. Instead he turned away from him and turned his back on him. He held himself erect in this way until they (the angels) bowed. They remained bowing for a hundred years, some say five hundred years. They raised their heads and he (Iblīs) was still standing in the same place. He did not repent his refusal nor did he resolve to follow suit. When they discerned that he had held back and would not bow, they bowed again, a second time. This time it was to God whereas the first had been to Adam. Iblīs saw this and yet he did not do what they did. It was of this that his refusal consisted.[89]

4. *Iblīs: the consequences of refusal*

The first confrontation with man ends in personal disaster for Iblīs; his choice isolates him from his angelic companions and brands him a renegade, worthy only of God's condemnation. Iblīs is driven from Paradise; some say he is banished from the heavens altogether.[90] The commentators are uncertain about the abode of his exile. Ibn Kathīr believes that he is removed to earth,[91] while Aṭ-Ṭabarsī locates his refuge in the midst of the oceans, from which vantage point Iblīs makes forays to

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[87] See Ch. 1, pp. 29-30.

[88] Ad-Diyārbakrī, *Ta'rīkh al-khamīs*, 1:51.

[89] *Ibid.*, 1:44-45.

[90] Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, 2:458; Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, 1:12; As-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-jalālayn*, 1:296, 2:194; Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:176; Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-bayān*, 2:402, 2:405, 3:336.

[91] Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, 1:12.

land in a disguised form, especially that of a thief.[92] And of course there is Hell, the final abode of fiery punishment prepared for all *kāfirūn*. This, all agree, is Iblīs' eventual resting place.[93]

Iblīs' sinful pride brings about a complete transformation, internal as well as external. The name change from ʿAzāzīl to Iblīs dates from this change in character[94] and points to the depth of his conversion to evil. His corrupt nature manifests itself now as Ash-Shayṭān, Satan. "And He said, 'Be gone from this place (Paradise)! For you are stoned' " (Qurʾān 15:24).[95] Iblīs is henceforth a pariah laden with the contagion of evil; his lot is to be reviled, cursed, and driven away by the stones of the faithful.[96]

The image of stoning is preserved even on the cosmic plane, for when the faithful look up into the heavens at night and see shooting stars flash across the sky, they are witnessing the ceaseless battle between the spirit world and Iblīs. Every time Iblīs and his armies assault the heavens to secure a foothold in the land of his former glories, hosts of angels shower them with meteorites. Iblīs and his followers are driven once again to the lower regions of darkness.[97]

Ath-Thaʿlabī summarizes the several aspects of Iblīs' punishment under ten headings: 1) Iblīs is stripped of all power. He no longer holds sway over the earth or the heavens above the earth, and he is relieved of the guardianship of Paradise; 2) God orders that he be driven down from the precincts of Paradise to earth; 3) Iblīs' form degenerates from that of an angelic being to a devil's form; 4) his interior and exterior changes require a change of name; the faithful ʿAzāzīl will henceforth be known as the wily Iblīs; 5) God appoints him leader (*imām*) of the villainous; 6) Iblīs bears the curse of God Himself; 7) the divine gnosis (*maʿrifa*) will forever remain beyond Iblīs' reach; 8) the door of repentance is bolted to him; 9) he is the eternal rebel, devoid of goodness and compassion; 10) throughout eternity Iblīs will be spokesman for the people of the raging fire.[98]

It is not sufficient simply to list the punishments Iblīs is to suffer. The tradition turns readily to the genre of mythic fable for an adequate form to express the emotional power of Iblīs' tragic fall. Apt illustrations are included in the works of Ad-Diyārbakrī and Ath-Thaʿlabī, each of which highlights the conflicting poles in Iblīs' personality. Ad-Diyārbakrī's text emphasizes the perversity of Iblīs and his hardness of heart.

[92] Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 3:336.
[93] *Ibid.*, 2:402.
[94] See Ch. 1, p. 25.
[95] See also Qurʾān 38:77.
[96] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 23:107.
[97] Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, 1:265; Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 3:336.
[98] Ath-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-majālis*, p. 29.

> Abū ʾl-ʿĀliya related that when Noah boarded the ark, lo and behold! there was Iblīs standing at the ark's stern. Noah said to him, 'Woe unto you! It is because of you that people have drowned.' He (Iblīs) said, 'What do you bid me do?' He (Noah) said, 'Repent!' Iblīs responded, 'Ask your Lord whether a way of repentance is open to me.' He (Iblīs) was told that his repentance lay in bowing before the grave of Adam. Iblīs retorted, 'I abandoned him when he was alive. Will I bow down before him now that he is dead?'[99]

It is to the credit of the Muslim tradition that it does not remember Iblīs only for this fierce pride. Ath-Thaʿlabī's selection reaffirms the positive qualities of Iblīs' former life, recalling that as ʿAzāzīl his existence had been radically different.[100]

> The story is told that Iblīs appeared to a group of the Banū Isrāʾīl. They said to him, 'Assume the status you held in the presence of the Lord God Almighty, i.e., in accordance with the position you held before you disobeyed your Lord.' He answered, 'You could not bear the sight of it.' They kept pestering him, so he assumed his former posture. When they looked upon him, upon his humility and obedience, they fell down dead—every last one of them.[101]

The former humble service does not, however, seem to carry sufficient weight to tip the balance in favor of an immediate rehabilitation. His plaint echoes back nothing more than harsh condemnations.

> People tell the story that Iblīs cried, 'O Lord, You have cursed me; You have banished me from Paradise; You have transformed me into a stoned satan, reprehensible, cast out. Yet You have sent messengers among the people of Adam. You have sent holy books down upon them. Who are to be my messengers?' God answered, 'The soothsayers.' Iblīs asked, 'And what are my holy scriptures?'
> 'Tattooed scrawls.'
> 'And what are to be my traditions (*ḥadīth*)?'
> 'Your *ḥadīth* are lies.'
> 'And what should I recite?'
> 'Your recitation is poetry.'
> 'And who is my muezzin?'
> 'Your muezzin is the piper.'
> 'And what is my mosque?'
> 'Your mosque is the bazaar.'
> 'And what is my home?'
> 'Your home is the bath.'
> 'And what is my food?'
> 'Your food is the food over which My name has not been invoked.'
> 'And what is my drink?'

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[99] Ad-Diyārbakrī, *Taʾrīkh al-khamīs*, 1:51.
[100] See Ch. 1, pp. 29-30.
[101] Ath-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-majālis*, p. 37.

'Your drink is anything alcoholic.'
'And what are my hunting grounds?'
'Your hunting grounds are women.'[102]

Nevertheless, Iblīs' millennia of humble submission should not be seen as counting for nought. Relying on God's remembrance of his former service[103] Iblīs petitions for a stay of execution, a respite until the final Day of Resurrection and Judgement. The respite is granted.[104] However, there is cunning deception even in this desperate plea; for, concealed in the request to be granted a delay until the Day of Resurrection, the commentators see a scheme by Iblīs to secure eternal life and freedom from the torments of Hell.

After the resurrection there will no longer be any death since the final apocalyptic upheaval will have occurred. If Iblīs can preserve himself until Resurrection Day, he will have outwitted God. But his pathetic ruse fails; God allows him to remain in existence only up to the First Trumpet Blast which will herald the advent of the apocalyptic destruction of the world.[105] Iblīs will be destroyed with the rest, and in place of eternal life, his reward is the eternal fire, home of all unbelievers.[106]

5. *Iblīs: the seduction of Adam and Eve*

This respite is time enough for Iblīs' purposes. He cannot repair the ruin he has suffered at the hands of Adam, but he can repay him in kind. It is now his turn to lay man low; he will entice the children of Adam, seduce them, and make them his minions.[107]

> The story is told...that Iblīs said, 'O Lord, You have driven me from Paradise on Adam's account, but I could not have done what I did without Your authorization.' He (God) said, 'Truly, you will have sway over him (Adam).' He (Iblīs) said, 'Lord, grant me more!' He said, 'He will not beget a child without two of the same being born to you.' He cried, 'Lord, grant me more!' He replied, 'Their breasts will be your dwelling place; you will flow in their bloodstream.' He shouted, 'Lord, grant me more!' He said,[108] 'Array against them your horses and footmen. Make them become partners in riches and children. Make promises to them. But Satan promises them nothing but vanities.'[109]

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[102] *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

[103] Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaᶜ al-bayān*, 2:403.

[104] Qurʾān 7:14-15, 15:36-37, 38:79-80. See also Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, 1:153; Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 8:91, 14:20, 23:107; Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaᶜ al-bayān*, 4:486; As-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-jalālayn*, 1:296, 1:324, 2:194.

[105] Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaᶜ al-bayān*, 3:337.

[106] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 8:90-91; Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaᶜ al-bayān*, 3:336.

[107] Qurʾān 7:16ff., 15:39ff., 17:62ff., 34:20ff., 38:82ff. See also Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, 1:265; Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 15:75; Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaᶜ al-bayān*, 14:388.

[108] The following lines are taken from Qurʾān 17:64.

[109] Ath-Thaᶜlabī, *ᶜArāʾis al-majālis*, p. 35.

Iblīs' respite is his opportunity for revenge. He asks for nothing more, not even forgiveness, and God grants him his request.[110]

> 'O Adam, you and your wife, make your home in the garden. And eat from whatever you desire. But do not either of you come near this tree or you will be evildoers.' Then Satan whispered to them so that he might expose to them their private parts which had been hidden from them. He (Iblīs) said, 'God has forbidden you this tree only to prevent your both becoming angels or immortal ones.' And he swore to them, 'Truly I am offering you sound advice.' Thus he brought them down by his deception. When they had tasted of the tree their private parts were revealed to them. And they hurried to stitch together leaves of the garden for themselves.... (Qurʾān 7:19-22).[111]

In its Qurʾānic context, Adam and Eve's loss of innocence is intimately linked with the lust for power and immortality as well as with the coming to conscious awareness of human sexuality. These elements are present in the various versions of the mythic events even though they may differ in other details.[112]

There are, however, certain inconsistencies in the temptation myth that caused consternation among the Muslim writers. How, for example, was it possible for Iblīs to confront Adam and Eve in the garden if he, Iblīs, had already been cursed and driven out? Several tentative solutions are offered. One suggestion is that Iblīs spoke to Adam and Eve through the gates of Paradise since he was barred entry;[113] another proposes that Iblīs was able somehow to converse with them from his new home of exile, the earth, or that perhaps Iblīs possessed telepathic powers.[114] Yet others believe that he took on the shape of an animal known in Paradise (possibly a camel) and was thus able to slip past the guardians of the gate.[115]

One mythic formulation, however, seems eventually to have gained prominence. The general lines proceed thus: Iblīs encounters his friend, the serpent (who before the fall possessed four legs), and petitions her to hide him in her mouth. The serpent agrees and Iblīs enters freely.[116] By means of this ruse Iblīs avoids the detection of the guards. In some versions of the myth Iblīs does not negotiate with the serpent in person;

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[110] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 8:98.

[111] See also Qurʾān 2:35ff., 20:117ff.

[112] Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, 1:153; Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:183, 8:95, 16:146; Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 2:406; As-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-jalālayn*, 1:177, 2:35.

[113] Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 1:87.

[114] *Ibid.*

[115] Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, 1:18; Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:182.

[116] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:181-183; Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, 1:18; Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 1:87; Ath-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-majālis*, p. 26.

instead he employs Ṭāwūs, the bird of Paradise (peacock), as his intermediary.[117]

There is no one standard text of the complete myth. The following translation is comprised of sections taken from three authors' (Ath-Thaʿlabī, Aṭ-Ṭabarī, Ad-Diyārbakrī) accounts of Iblīs' entry into Paradise and his entrapment of Adam and Eve. Yet even this approach is unsatisfactory, for it is impossible to incorporate the wealth of detail that has grown up around the story of Iblīs' seduction of Adam and Eve. The myth has evolved into a highly charged dramatization whose characters exemplify mankind's struggle with freedom, good, and evil.

> People say that when Iblīs heard about Adam's entry into Paradise, he became envious of him and said, 'Cursed be he! I was worshipping God for so many thousands of years and He never escorted me into Paradise. And this creature, God Most High just created him now, then He escorted him into Paradise!' And so he plotted stratagems for removing Adam—peace be upon him!—from Paradise.
>
> Iblīs stationed himself before the gate of Paradise where he devoted himself to God's service for three hundred years until he became renowned for his worship. And people took cognizance of him because of it. He (Iblīs), through all of this, kept his eye peeled for the departure from Paradise of someone through whom he might gain access to Adam.
>
> He (Iblīs) remained at the gate of Paradise for three hundred years. During that time God did not permit any creature's departure from the garden. While he was thus engaged, all of a sudden Ṭāwūs came out to him. He (Ṭāwūs) was the lord of the birds of Paradise. When Iblīs caught sight of him, he cried out, 'O noble creature, who are you? And what is your name? I have never beheld one of God's creatures more beautiful than you!' And he (Ṭāwūs) replied, 'I am one of the birds of Paradise. My name is Ṭāwūs.' Then Iblīs began to weep. Ṭāwūs asked him, 'Who are you? And from whence your crying?' Iblīs answered him, 'I am an angel from among the Cherubim. And I have shed tears in this state of grief because your beauty will pass away as well as the perfection of your nature.' Ṭāwūs asked him, 'Will all that I am slip away from me?' He (Iblīs) said, 'Most assuredly. Truly you will pass away and die. All creatures will die except those who eat from the tree of immortality. Then they will be the immortal ones from among these creatures.' Ṭāwūs asked, 'Well, where is this tree?' Iblīs answered. 'It is in the garden.' Ṭāwūs said, 'And who will point out its location to us?' Iblīs said, 'I will point it out to you if you get me into Paradise.' Ṭāwūs said, 'How can I get you into the garden? There is no way to it except through the presence of Riḍwān. No one enters or leaves the garden without his permission. But I will direct you to one of the creatures of God Most High who will bring you into it (the garden). If anyone can do it, she is the one, she and no one else. She is the attendant of God Most High's vicegerent, Adam.' And Iblīs asked, 'Who is she?' Ṭāwūs answered, 'The serpent.' Iblīs said, 'Hurry to her. And if good fortune is with us in our undertaking, perhaps she will be able to accomplish this.'

[117] Ath-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-majālis*, pp. 26-27.

And so Ṭāwūs came to the snake and told her of Iblīs' whereabouts and of what he had heard from him. And he (Ṭāwūs) said, 'I saw at the gate of Paradise an angel of the Cherubim with such and such characteristics. Do you see your way clear to getting him into Paradise so that he can point out to us the tree of immortality?'

The serpent rushed off in his direction. And when she came to him, Iblīs told her roughly what he had said to Ṭāwūs. And she said, 'How can I get you into Paradise? If Riḍwān catches sight of you, you will not be able to enter.' He answered her, 'I will change into a wind and you can put me between your fangs.' She said, 'Yes!'[118]

Thereupon Iblīs—may God curse him!—transformed himself into a wind and entered the snake's mouth. Then she brought him into Paradise. When Iblīs had entered Paradise he showed her (the snake) the tree which God had forbidden to Adam. He proceeded on until he stood before Adam and Eve—may peace be upon them both! They did not perceive that he was Iblīs. He (Iblīs) started to wail a lament which saddened them both and they began to cry. (He was the first person who ever wailed.) They asked him, 'What is making you cry?' He replied, 'I am crying over you, because you will die and you will be separated from the happiness and esteem you now experience.' This touched them both to the quick and they pondered it. Iblīs shed tears and then went on his way.

After a time Iblīs came back to them for his words had made an impression on them both. He said, 'O Adam, shall I point out to you the tree of immortality and of power that does not dwindle away?' He (Adam) said, 'Yes!' He (Iblīs) said, 'Eat from this tree, the tree of wheat.' He (Adam) replied, 'But my Lord forbade it to me.' Iblīs retorted, 'Your Lord has forbidden you this tree only to prevent your both becoming angels or immortal ones.'

He (Adam) refused to give in to him. So he (Iblīs) swore to them both by God that he was offering sound advice. This fooled them for they could not imagine that anyone would falsely take an oath using God's name. Eve rushed to eat of the tree. She kept telling Adam how wonderful it was[119] until he ate of it.[120]

Thereupon their private parts were exposed to them both. Adam hid in the hollow of a tree. Then his Lord called him, 'O Adam, where are you?' He answered, 'Here I am Lord.' He (God) said, 'Are you not coming out?' He (Adam) replied, 'I am ashamed in Your presence, O Lord.' And he (God) said, 'Damned be the earth from which you were created as a curse....[121]

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[118] In Aṭ-Ṭabarī's work Iblīs does not achieve his aim so easily. He is obliged to canvass many animals before coming upon the serpent who finally capitulates: "...Iblīs showed himself to the animals of the earth that they might bear him up and bring him into Paradise with them. And this so that he might speak with Adam and his wife. All the animals refused him this until he spoke with the snake...." (*Tafsīr*, 1:182-183).

[119] It is suggested that Eve got Adam drunk on wine to sway him to her will. From this incident some would derive the Qurʾānic prohibition against wine-drinking. See Ath-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-majālis*, p. 27.

[120] This entire section is taken from Ath-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-majālis*, pp. 26-27.

[121] This brief section is taken from Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:181.

> God reproved Adam and said to him, 'Why did you eat from this tree? Did I not forbid to both of you this tree?' He answered, 'Eve gave me to eat.' He (God) said to her, 'Why did you give him to eat?' She said, 'The serpent directed me.' He (God) said to the snake, 'Why did you do this?' She said, 'Ṭāwūs guided me.' He (God) said to Ṭāwūs, 'Why did you do this?' He (Ṭāwūs) replied, 'Iblīs ordered me.' And so He punished Iblīs and cursed him....[122]

Iblīs' revenge is complete, but the relationship between Iblīs and Adam has not come to an end. It is a consummate irony that the jealousy and hate that have characterized the relationship between Iblīs and Adam only serve to link them together for eternity. They will never be rid of each other; one's fate is intimately involved with the other's. Their conflict will be played out time and time again in the lives of their descendants, "enemies one to the other" (Qurʾān 2:36).[123] The enmity of Adam's progeny, however, is a sign of hope, a sign of their faith in God's Word. As for Iblīs' progeny, their enmity towards Adam's race is a constant testimony to their *kufr*, unbelief.[124]

It is striking, however, that the Muslim tradition once again refuses to lay all the responsibility or blame at Iblīs' door. Each—Iblīs and Adam—has actively participated in his own personal downfall as well as in the downfall of the other. Neither the centuries-long devotions of the one, nor the presence of the divine spark in the other, is sufficient protection from the snare of pride.

> The story is told that Adam encountered Iblīs in a land of waterless desert. And he (Adam) rebuked him for his deed. He said to him, 'O cursed one! What kind of thing is this that you caused to happen to me? You beguiled me. You dislodged me from Paradise. You did with me what you set out to do.' Iblīs wept. He said, 'O Adam, I did with you what you say. I brought you down to this place. But who brought about the state that I am in, and settled me in this place?'[125]

B. *The Perspective of Ḥadīth*

1. *Sources*

The mythic history of Iblīs is not complete without an examination of an early formative element in the Muslim Community's formulation of

[122] Ad-Diyārbakrī, *Taʾrīkh al-khamīs*, 1:51. The text of Ad-Diyārbakrī continues with a vivid description of the transformation of Iblīs from angel to devil because of his role in the seduction of Adam and Eve. This, however, seems redundant since Iblīs was previously condemned and transformed for his refusal to worship Adam. This lack of consistency is not uncommon, and reflects the oral origin of much of Iblīs' mythic history. It may also indicate a telescoping of the two incidents in the popular mind into two successive aspects of the same event.

[123] Similarly in Qurʾān 7:24, 20:123. See also Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 16:147; As-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-jalālayn*, 1:10.

[124] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:185; Aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 1:87.

[125] Ath-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-majālis*, p. 36.

Iblīs' significance, i.e., the manuals of traditions or *ḥadīth*. The collections of the traditions about the Prophet Muḥammad and his early companions represent a genre of religious literature that is distinguishable from the commentaries and prophetic tales examined above and predates them chronologically. Much *ḥadīth* material, in fact, is quoted by later Qurʾān commentators as evidence for their interpretations of particular texts.

The most influential manuals of *ḥadīth* were compiled and codified by the end of the ninth century C.E. They thus provide an insight into an early stratum of the Muslim Community's perceptions of the role of Iblīs/Ash-Shayṭān in Islamic religious life.

Ḥadīth collections present many procedural problems. At the outset one is confronted with the fact that there is no readily available concordance or index listing the *ḥadīth* in which Iblīs is specifically mentioned.[126] One is obliged to examine all the extant material since the divisions of the manuals provided by the various Muslim compilers do not, in many cases, offer clues to where Iblīs material could be found.

To examine carefully all the extant *ḥadīth* literature would entail a research project of its own; the scope of this inquiry, therefore, must be limited. However it is felt that the material about to be discussed is representative of the major currents in the *ḥadīth* compilations. The traditionists whose work is the focus of concentration are Al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Ibn Māja.[127] Neither Muslim nor Ibn Māja organizes the traditions concerning Iblīs under separate headings; rather, they crop up throughout, often unexpectedly. It is only Al-Bukhārī who sees fit to dedicate two sections solely to Iblīs and his followers.[128] His *Ṣaḥīḥ*, therefore, offers the most easily accessible Iblīs material of the three traditionists under discussion.

A brief overview of the relevant material culled from these three manuals presents a picture that contrasts strikingly with the more developed Iblīs mythology of the later commentaries and fables. In the *ḥadīth* manuals Iblīs is scarcely mentioned by name at all. There are fewer

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[126] The standard concordance is that of A. J. Wensinck, *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane*, begun in 1933 and published at Leiden. It does not, however, list proper names. Consequently no entry appears for Iblīs.

[127] Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Ismāʿīl Ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn Al-Mughīra Ibn Bardizba Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 9 vols. (Cairo: Dār wa maṭābiʿ ash-shaʿb, n.d.); Abū ʾl-Ḥusayn Muslim Ibn Al-Ḥajjāj Ibn Muslim Al-Qushayrī An-Nīsābūrī, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 8 vols. (Beirut: The Trading Office, n.d.); Al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Yazīd Al-Qazwīnī Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, ed. Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿAbd Al-Bāqī, 2 vols. (n.p.: Dār iḥyāʾ al-kutub al-ʿarabīya, 1373 A.H.-1954 C.E.).

[128] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, "*Bāb ṣifat Iblīs wa junūdih*" and "*Bāb dhikr al-jinn wa thawābihim wa ʿiqābihim*," vol. 4, *Kitāb badʾ al-khalq*, pp. 147-154.

than ten specific references to Iblīs in Muslim, Ibn Māja and the two *bābs* (sections) of Al-Bukhārī combined.[129] The *ḥadīth*, however, should not be thought to be devoid of references to the Prince of Evil. There are approximately two hundred instances of the use of the title Ash-Shayṭān, of which the vast majority refer to Satan himself and not to a lesser spirit.

The predominance of the use of Ash-Shayṭān over Iblīs in the *ḥadīth* collections of Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and Ibn Māja points to more than simply a semantic preference. It does not seem rash to suggest that each title portrays the Islamic devil figure in a distinct light. The name Iblīs, as seen earlier, is intimately linked with the development of a complex, mythic personality; Iblīs is ascetic, devoted worshipper, master of the heavens, guardian of Paradise, defender of the Throne, arrogant, prideful, impetuous, etc. One cannot paint him only in blacks and whites. There is too much conflict and ambiguity in his make-up, and it is this very complexity that adds vividness and depth to his portrait.

The title Ash-Shayṭān, as employed in the *ḥadīth*, views the Muslim devil from a substantially different perspective. We are confronted more with a malevolent force than with a highly nuanced personality. The focus is not on Iblīs/Ash-Shayṭān's interior psychic processes but rather on the ruinous effects this evil force has upon the lives of men and women. This should not seem strange considering the heightened concern of the *ḥadīth* with human praxis. Ash-Shayṭān is more often than not one-dimensional; he is evil, cunning, and wily; his delight is to lead mankind astray. There is little ambiguity here. It is generally in the few specific references to Iblīs by name that his personality comes to life in all its complexity.

An overview of the Iblīs/Ash-Shayṭān material indicates that it touches the following concrete aspects of human life: 1) Satan's intimate link with man's nature and his manifestations in man's psychic life: sleep, dreams, visions, etc.; 2) his efforts to disrupt man's prayer life and his meddling with eating, drinking, and other bodily functions; 3) Satan's heightened power to ensnare at twilight, night, and dawn; 4) the assistance God provides to men and women against the foe. It will be valuable for us to discuss briefly each of these areas, thus, hopefully, rounding out our mythic biography of Iblīs as it is formulated by the Muslim community.

2. *Iblīs/Ash-Shayṭān: man's nature and psychic life*

> Abū Bakr Ibn Abī Shayba related that Yūnus Ibn Muḥammad related from Ḥammād Ibn Salama, from Thābit, from Anas who said that the messenger

[129] These references to Iblīs by name are found in Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:147, 4:152; Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:31, 8:138 (two references); Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:751 #2234, 2:875 #2622, 2:1002 #3013.

> of God—may God bless him and grant him peace!—said, 'When God formed Adam in Paradise, God bequeathed him what He wished to bequeath him. Then Iblīs began to walk around him to see what he was. And when he (Iblīs) perceived that he (Adam) was hollow, he knew that he (Adam) was created as a creature who could not restrain himself.'[130]

From the moment of creation man is seen to possess within himself seeds of destruction; moreover, Iblīs recognizes this innate weakness and resolves to exploit it. Henceforth he will await all men and women at birth, and, as they are born, he will prick them, goad them, and thus initiate their entrapment. This is why a child cries out at birth. In the entire history of mankind, only two exceptions have been made to this rule—ʿĪsā (Jesus) and his mother, Maryam (Mary).

> Abū Bakr Ibn Abī Shayba related that ʿAbd Al-Aʿlā related from Maʿmar, from Az-Zuhrī, from Saʿīd, from Abū Hurayra who said that the messenger of God—may God bless him and grant him peace!—said, 'No child is born without Satan (Ash-Shayṭān) pricking him. Then he (the child) begins to cry out from the goad of Satan—except the son of Maryam and his mother....'[131]

The intimacy of the involvement between Satan and mankind is attested to by the fact that all three authors relate similar *ḥadīth* highlighting this close relationship. The image used to convey this pervasive presence in man is not easily translatable. The Arabic idiom reads: "*Inna ʾsh-Shayṭān yajrī min al-insān* (or *Ibn Ādam*) *majrā ʾd-dam.*"[132] Hans Wehr suggests as a current equivalent the English expression "to become second nature to someone,"[133] yet this ignores the concreteness of the Arabic—Satan is part of man's very lifeblood (*dam*). To purge him would entail self-destruction, for Satan moves along the same path of arteries and veins (*majrā ʾd-dam*) through which human blood flows. To be alive means to know Satan in one's very core.

A dramatic illustration of the seriousness with which Muslims treated Satan's power over man's inner drives and psychic processes occurs in Muḥammad's own life. Muḥammad is human and, therefore, must have been pricked by Satan's goad at birth. Yet how is it possible for God's very messenger to remain so tainted?

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[130] Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:31. See also Ch. 1, p. 34.

[131] Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 7:96-97. Similar *ḥadīth* can be found in Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:151; Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 7:97 (two *ḥadīth*); 8:53-54.

[132] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:150; Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 7:8-9 (two *ḥadṯth*); Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1:565-566 #1779.

See also the use of this expression in Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:184.

[133] Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Arabic*, ed. J. Milton Cowan (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1961), p. 121.

> Shaybān Ibn Farrūkh related that Ḥammād Ibn Salama related that Thābit Al-Bunānī related from Anas Ibn Mālik who said that the messenger of God—may God bless him and grant him peace!—was visited by Gabriel—may God bless him and grant him peace!—while he (Muḥammad) was playing with some young boys. He (Gabriel) seized him, threw him down and split open his chest. He removed his heart and removed from his heart a clot. And he said, 'This is the satanic part of you.' Then he washed it (the heart) in a gold basin with water from Zamzam. He mended it and put it back in its place.... And Anas said, 'I used to see the trace of this scar on his chest.'[134]

The interior presence of Ash-Shayṭān is concretely personified in Muslim life through the mediacy of the spirit world. The *ḥadīth* point up the fact that each and every man or woman possesses his or her own particular companion *shayṭān* or *jinn*. Even Muḥammad, whose interior was cleansed, is not exempt; his only advantage is that, with God's help, his personal spirit was converted to Islam and thenceforth was a force only for good in his life.

> ʿUthmān Abū Shayba and Isḥāq Ibn Ibrāhīm related that Isḥāq told us that ʿUthmān said that Jarīr related from Manṣūr, from Sālim Ibn Abī ʾl-Jaʿd, from his father, from ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Masʿūd who said that the messenger of God—may God bless him and grant him peace!—said, 'There is no one among you who does not have a *jinn* as his companion placed in charge of him.' They said, 'And you, too, O messenger of God?' He said, 'Even me, except that God came to my assistance against him and he (the *jinn*) has become Muslim. Now he only urges me to good.'[135]

This constant interference of spirits in human life becomes a rational explanation for periodic erratic behavior. Uncontrolled rage, for example, is seen as a direct result of satanic intervention; consequently its alleviation is achieved by seeking refuge in God from "Satan the Stoned."[136]

Not only mental aberrations, but any peculiar human conduct can be interpreted as inspired by, or reflecting, man's involvement with the spirit world of *jinn* and *shayāṭīn*. The *ḥadīth* tell of an occasion on which Muḥammad caught sight of a man rushing about in chase of a dove. His comment was: "It is one devil pursuing another devil."[137]

There is one final stage of personification and exteriorization that can take place; Ash-Shayṭān, Satan himself, is endowed with the power to appear in the forms of different people. He thereby can approach unsuspecting men and women in a non-threatening fashion, surrep-

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[134] Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:101-102.

[135] *Ibid.*, 8:139. There are three similar *ḥadīth* transcribed on this page of Muslim's work. See also 5:182 for another mention of Muḥammad's personal *shayṭān*.

[136] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:150-151; Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:30-31 (two *ḥādīth*).

[137] Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:1238 #3764, 2:1238 #3766; 2:1239 #3767.

titiously to weave his seductive web.[138] One of Satan's most subtle ruses is to approach a believer in the guise of a man seeking religious truth. He inquires about the origin of the heavens, the created world, and its inhabitants, and about God's prophets and messengers. Finally he asks, "And who created your Lord?" In the face of such blasphemy the believer must seek refuge in God.[139]

Man's confrontation with Satan's disguised form attains its fullest intensity not in man's everyday conscious life, but in the semi-conscious realm of dream and sleep. The power of the spirit world is felt with far greater force there than in the waking state because Satan can avail himself of the most frightening of nightmarish forms.

In general the *ḥadīth* distinguish between two categories of sleep experience: *al-ḥulm*, the dream, which is predominantly the product of satanic influence, and *ar-ruʾyā*, the vision, which is sent by God. The cure for *al-ḥulm* is very straightforward: spit three times to the left; some add that one should also change sleeping position.[140] In contrast to *al-ḥulm*, *ar-ruʾyā* is to be cherished since it is linked with the prophetic experience and with the revelation of God's will. Thus *ar-ruʾyā* often unveils things of consequence for one's waking state.[141]

More subtly debilitating than the ghoulish apparitions of *al-ḥulm* are those occasions on which Satan feigns the dream-form of a friend, lover, or family member. No better means could be found to lead a trusting believer astray. It even seemed conceivable that Satan might appear as the Prophet of God himself. The *ḥadīth* assure the community, however, that God will preserve His faithful from this ultimate deception.

> Abū Marwān Al-ʿUthmānī told us and said that ʿAbd Al-ʿAzīz Ibn Abī Ḥāzim related from Al-ʿAlāʾ Ibn ʿAbd Ar-Raḥmān, from his father, from Abū Hurayra who said that the messenger of God—may God bless him and grant him peace!—said, 'He who sees me in sleep has truly seen me, for Satan does not take on my form.'[142]

The *ḥadīth* are very perceptive in their insights into the wider psychological ramifications of satanic dreams. The fear of spreading panic and hysteria seems to underlie the traditions' prohibitions against

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[138] Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:9.

[139] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:149; Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:84 (three *ḥadīth*).

[140] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:152-153; Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 7:50, 7:51-52 (five *ḥadīth*); Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:1285 #3906, 2:1285-1286 #3907, 2:1286 #3908, 2:1286 #3909.

[141] Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:1285 #3906, 2:1285-1286 #3907.

[142] Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:1284 #3901. The concern felt over this issue is attested to by the number of similar *ḥadīth* recorded by the traditionists. See Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 7:54 (four *ḥadīth*); Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:1284 #3900, 2:1284 #3902, 2:1284 #3903, 2:1284-1285 #3904, 2:1285 #3905.

communicating to others frightening encounters with Satan in the dream state. One pertinent example is an oft-recurring *ḥadīth* about a man who dreamt his head had been cut off and that his body was rushing after his head as it rolled along. Muḥammad assuages the man's terror by explaining that this is Satan's way of playing with him. More to the point, the Prophet warns him that such foolishness is not to be broadcast to the community: "If Satan toys with someone of you in his dream state, do not under any circumstances tell people about it."[143] As protection against these satanic onslaughts the believer must take refuge in God and His Word, especially by reciting the verse of the Throne (Qurʾān 2:255).[144]

The presence of Ash-Shayṭān pervades the whole sleep process from the onset of drowsiness to waking. When a man yawns, the *ḥadīth* warn him to cover his mouth lest Satan enter;[145] and he should not make any noise as he yawns, for it is the sound of Satan's laugh.[146] On waking, the faithful must purify their noses with water since Satan makes his home there during the night.[147] Nor is that sufficient; during the night Satan has tied a cord around the believer's neck and knotted it three times. If, on waking, God's name is invoked, one knot is loosed; the second is removed by the performance of the ablutions. Complete freedom is achieved by the performance of morning prayers.[148]

One last involvement of Satan with man during the night deserves mention, although it does not specifically involve the processes related to sleep. The faithful believer is cautioned by the *ḥadīth* to seek refuge in God from Satan when he has intercourse with his wife. More importantly, God's help and protection should be invoked lest Satan harm the child that God may produce from their union.[149]

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[143] Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:1287 #3912. See also Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 7:54-55 (three *ḥadīth*); Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:1287 #3911, 2:1287 #3913.

[144] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:149.

[145] Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:226 (three *ḥadīth*).

[146] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:152; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1:310 #968.

[147] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:153; Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:146-147.

[148] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:148; Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:187; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1:421-422 #1329. The most peculiar of Satan's sleep activities recorded by the *ḥadīth* is transmitted by all three authors. The *ḥadīth* in question relates Muḥammad's story of a man who awoke after having slept the whole night through and found that Ash-Shayṭān had urinated in his ear (or ears). The significance of this story, while not immediately apparent, becomes clearer in the analysis of Sufi commentators. See Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:148; Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:187; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:422 #1330. See also Ch. 2, p. 72.

[149] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:148-149, 4:151; Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:155; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1:618 #1919.

3. *Iblīs/Ash-Shayṭān: prayer-life, eating, drinking, and ritual purity*

The efficacy of prayer in defending the believer from the wiles of Satan is emphatically stated throughout the Muslim tradition. Satan need only hear the call to prayer to be struck with terror and revulsion; he then flees on the wind.[150] Prayer is a daily testimony of the believer's allegiance to God and his rejection of Satan's blandishments.

> Ibrāhīm Ibn Al-Mustamirr Al-ʿUrūqī told us, 'My father related that ʿUbays Ibn Maymūn related that ʿAwn Al-ʿUqaylī related from Abū ʿUthmān An-Nahdī, from Salmān who said, "I heard the messenger of God—may God bless him and grant him peace!—say, 'He who leaves early for morning prayer, leaves under the banner of faith. But he who leaves early for the bazaar, leaves under the banner of Iblīs.' " '[151]

It is therefore imperative for Satan to weaken this critical link between God and man. To achieve this end, there is but one means—the act of prayer itself must be attacked.[152]

Satan's flight on hearing the call to prayer is only a strategic withdrawal, for soon he returns to whisper (*waswasa*) distractions. The individual becomes drowsy or inattentive, with the consequence that the proper counting and sequence of prostrations and invocations is disrupted.[153] When one finds himself in this predicament there is no need for doubt and anxiety; the *ḥadīth* recommend that the individual perform two prostrations and continue on with the prayer. This simple remedy frustrates completely Satan's efforts to disorient the Muslim engaged in his daily prayers.[154]

Satan's attack upon prayer is not restricted to the psyche or spirit of the devout Muslim; in this instance, too, the satanic force externalizes itself. The *ḥadīth* warn lest the person engaged in prayer allow another person to come into his presence and thus interrupt his recitation. The offender

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[150] Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:5-6 (five *ḥadīth*).

[151] Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:751 #2234.

[152] It is perhaps for this reason that the tradition recounts Muḥammad's seeking refuge from Satan at the beginning of prayer. See Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1:265 #807. This same invocation is repeated on leaving the mosque. See Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1:254 #773.

[153] The following *ḥadīth* all speak to this issue in varying detail. See Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:151-152 (two *ḥadīth*); Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:5-6 (two *ḥadīth*), 2:84; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1:299 #926.

[154] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:151; Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:82-83 (three *ḥadīth*); Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1:384 #1216, 1:384 #1217. A more detailed *ḥadīth* of Ibn Māja describes a particular encounter of Muḥammad with a man whose prayers were constantly disrupted by an unknown force. Muḥammad points to Ash-Shayṭān as the culprit. The cure or exorcism is far more elaborate than in the *ḥadīth* above. Muḥammad strikes the man's chest, spits in his mouth, and says, "Come out, O Enemy of God!" Muḥammad performs this rite three times before the exorcism is successful. See Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:1174-1175 #3548.

must immediately be driven off, for he or she is a minion of Satan himself.[155] In addition to the apparitions of Satan in human form, he appears also as an animal, most often in the shape of a jet-black dog. When one of these dogs disrupts a person's prayer, it is a clear sign of the presence of a devil. The dog should not be spared but should be put to death.[156]

The *ḥadīth* literature points to the presence of Ash-Shayṭān at the most mundane levels of human existence. He accompanies the faithful through every aspect of their daily lives. Were a Muslim not to pronounce the name of God on entering his home, Satan would make his home there; were he not to invoke God's name over his food before eating, Satan would become his permanent dinner guest.[157]

Eating seems a particularly vulnerable time. The Muslim must be on his guard lest he unknowingly imitates Ash-Shayṭān's eating and drinking habits. He must especially take care not to eat, drink, take, or give with his left hand, because this is the hand that Satan uses.[158] If by chance food should fall to the ground, it is not proper to discard it all. Pick it up and remove only what is soiled; the remainder should be consumed. Otherwise you will unknowingly be providing food for Satan.[159]

Not only does Satan meddle during the meal but he also tries to entice believers into consuming what has been forbidden by divine law.

> Ibn Abī ʿUmar related to us that Sufyān related from Ayyūb, from Muḥammad, from Anas who said, 'When the messenger of God—may God bless him and grant him peace!—captured Khaybar we grabbed donkeys as they were coming out of the village. Then we cooked some of them. The spokesman of God's messenger—may God bless him and grant him peace!—cried out, "Does not God and His messenger forbid you this? For truly it is filth from Satan's work!" The pots with their contents were overturned and what was in them kept gushing out.'[160]

Prescriptions to counteract ritual impurity abound in the *ḥadīth*, because where there is impurity, one finds Ash-Shayṭān.[161] Anything else

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[155] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:149; Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:57-58 (four *ḥadīth*); Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1:307 #954.

[156] Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:59, 5:36; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1:307 #954, 2:1071 #3210. In one *ḥadīth* Muslim names the devil who is responsible for disrupting the prayers of the faithful. He is called Khinzab (or Khinzib). See Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 7:20-21.

[157] Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 6:107-108 (two *ḥadīth*); Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:1279 #3887.

[158] Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 6:108-109 (three *ḥadīth*); Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:1087 #3266, 2:1088 #3268.

[159] Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 6:114-115 (four *ḥadīth*); Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:1091 #3278.

[160] Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 6:65. Not only the meat of the donkey but also its braying is linked with Satan. See Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:85.

[161] Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1:109 #229, 1:121-122 #337.

that is contrary to proper conduct is also Satan's work—gambling and other games of chance are his invention;[162] frivolous words, especially poetry, come from his mouth. Muḥammad's position on this point could not be clearer: "That a man's belly be full of pus is better for him than its being full of poetry!"[163] The Muslim must take refuge in God and in His law if he is to avoid the pitfalls that Satan prepares for him every moment of the day.

4. *Iblīs/Ash-Shayṭān: night, a time of heightened power*

Further significant examples of the externalization of satanic power are illustrated in the *ḥadīth*'s discussion of cosmic processes. Prominent among these is the movement of the sun, whose rising and setting have direct impact on the lives of men and women. The transitions from light to darkness to light are periods of heightened satanic influence, the most potent among them being the time of darkness.

The advent of sunrise is heralded by shafts of light appearing on the horizon which are interpreted as the horns of Satan between which the sun makes its appearance.[164] In fact, not only does it rise between Satan's horns but it also sets between these same shafts.[165] It is imperative for the faithful to be on their guard during these critical moments, for the power of Satan is at a peak. All prayer should cease until the crisis has passed[166] because Hell is heating up and its doors are opened wide.[167]

After sunset, care, too, must be taken, for Satan wanders about freely at night and is a potential threat. Children, especially, must be protected. The house must be secured against Satan's intrusions—lock doors, fasten waterskins and jars tightly. The words of Muḥammad assure us that Satan is not capable of loosing what has been firmly tied.[168]

The most forbidding aspect of the origin of the sun's course is the link it represents with the proliferation of discord (*al-fitna*) among men. Sunrise is the font from which discord flows.

> ᶜAbd Allāh Ibn Maslama related to us from Mālik, from ᶜAbd Allāh Ibn Dīnār, from ᶜAbd Allāh Ibn ᶜUmar—may God be pleased with them both!—who said, 'I saw the messenger of God—may God bless him and

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[162] Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 7:125-126.

[163] *Ibid.*, 7:50.

[164] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:149; Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:51, 2:105, 2:110, 2:207-210 (two *ḥadīth*); Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1:396 #1251, 1:397 #1252, 1:397 #1253.

[165] Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:208-210; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1:396 #1251.

[166] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:149; Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:207; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1:396 #1251, 1:397 #1252, 1:397 #1253.

[167] Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1:397 #1252.

[168] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:150; Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 6:106 (two *ḥadīth*); Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:1129 #3410.

> grant him peace!—pointing towards the East. And he said "Right there, truly discord is right there. Yea, discord is from right there where the horn of Satan rises." '[169]

The *ḥadīth* manuals are more vivid and detailed than usual when they treat of this spread of discord, insisting that special care is clearly warranted on the part of the community. The destructive impact of discord on the community and its component social units (family, etc.) is apparent to all faithful Muslims. This insight does not escape Iblīs; on the contrary, it is a catalyst that incites him to action. From his throne upon the oceans he sends forth his armies of devils. Those he cherishes and rewards most are the ones most successful at sowing discord and strife.[170]

> Abū Kurayb Muḥammad Ibn Al-ᶜAlāᵓ and Isḥāq Ibn Ibrāhīm (the formulation belongs to Abū Kurayb) both said, 'Abū Muᶜāwiya told us that Al-Aᶜmash related to us from Abū Sufyān, from Jābir who said that the messenger of God—may God bless him and grant him peace!—said, "Iblīs places his throne upon the waters. Then he sends forth his flying columns. To those who are best at sowing discord, he has granted a place close to him. One of them comes and says, 'I have done such and such!' Then he replies, 'You have not accomplished anything.' " He said, "Then another of them comes and says, 'I did not leave him until I had caused division between him and his wife.' " He said, "Then he (Iblīs) brings him close to himself and says, 'You have done well!'..." '[171]

5. *Iblīs/Ash-Shayṭān: the assistance God grants against the foe*

Recommendations for freeing the human spirit from the grasp of Iblīs/Ash-Shayṭān have already been encountered above in the *ḥadīth* material. Common men and women are not as fortunate as the prophet Muḥammad whose heart was cleansed of evil influence by Gabriel, and whose companion spirit was converted to Islam.[172] The Muslim must seek refuge in God from "Satan the Stoned"[173] as well as perform certain ritual acts if he is to escape Satan's power.

Prayer is by far the most efficacious avenue of relief,[174] with particular prayers often prescribed as protection against particular assaults of Satan. Yet there is one basic prayer, the "*lā ilāh illa ᵓllāh*" ("there is no

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[169] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:150. See also Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:180-182 (six *ḥadīth*).

[170] Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:138-139 (three *ḥadīth*).

[171] Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:138. How the oceans became the home camp of Iblīs and the *shayāṭīn* is alluded to in another *ḥadīth* of Muslim's. There he refers to Solomon's having imprisoned the *shayāṭīn* in the ocean. They are on the verge of escaping and descending on mankind with a satanic Qurᵓān. See Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:9-10.

[172] See Ch. 1, pp. 47-48.

[173] See Ch. 1, p. 48.

[174] See Ch. 1, pp. 50-52.

god but God''), whose constant repetition guards against many different evils, including the varied onslaughts of Satan.[175]

In addition to the protection of sacred words, there is also the shield of sacred time. During the holy month of Ramaḍān believers can rest at ease, conscious that the power of evil has been reduced to its lowest ebb. Consequently men and women are able to focus their attention completely on repentance and seeking God's mercy.

> Yaḥyā Ibn Bukayr related to us that Al-Layth related to us and said, ''Uqayl told me from Ibn Shihāb who said, ''Ibn Abī Anas, the *mawla* of the Taymī, told me that his father told him that he heard Abū Hurayra—may God be pleased with him!—say that the messenger of God—may God bless him and grant him peace!—said, 'When Ramaḍān has begun, the doors of Paradise are opened and the doors of Hell are locked. The devils (*ash-shayāṭīn*) are chained up.' '' ''[176]

To sacred words and time must be added sacred place. Since the Arabian Peninsula is the cradle of Islam, those who pray there are especially endowed with divine protection. And, in the Peninsula, the holy city of Makka is the sacred focal point where one senses most profoundly God's mercy and the refuge God provides man from ''Satan the Stoned.''[177]

The power of sacred words, sacred time, and sacred place should not, however, be exaggerated. Their impact is in direct relation to the interior state of the individual. Many prayers, fasts, and pilgrimages have been performed by hypocrites and unbelievers, but these acts redound to their condemnation, not their salvation. Trust in God and confidence in His Word are, therefore, essential inner qualities. Be prepared to accept God's decrees with no ''ifs'' or ''buts''; ''ifs'' and ''buts'' are Satan's creations.[178]

We have come full circle. At the heart of humble trust and confidence in God is obedience to God's will (*irāda*) and command (*amr*). At the outset of Iblīs' mythic history, he is ordered to bow, but he disobeys and is condemned. The bow every Muslim makes in prayer is a constant and concrete reminder to Iblīs of the confrontation that initiated his downfall.

> Abū Bakr Ibn Abī Shayba related to us that Abū Muᶜāwiya related from Al-Aᶜmash, from Abū Ṣāliḥ, from Abū Hurayra who said that the messenger of God—may God bless him and grant him peace!—said, 'When the son of Adam read about the prostration, he prostrated. Then Ash-Shayṭān stood off at a distance and cried, saying, ''Woe to him![179] The son of Adam was

[175] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:153; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:1248 #3798, 2:1272 #3867.

[176] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:149-150. See also Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 3:121 (two *ḥadīth*); Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1:526 #1642.

[177] Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:138; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:1015 #3055.

[178] Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:56; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:1395 #4168.

[179] The version in Muslim adds in parentheses ''woe to me'' as an alternative reading. See Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:61.

> ordered to prostrate and he prostrated. Now Paradise is his. I was ordered to prostrate and I refused. So the fire is mine!'' ''[180]

Man is weak yet God is Ar-Raḥmān, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Interior conversion and obedience to God's will do not come easily to the Banū Ādam, for Iblīs never ceases his clever deceptions, and strives continually to bring mankind to perdition. But man's ultimate victory is found in the mercy of God, and it is God's willingness to forgive that renders Iblīs impotent. His victories are, in the end, pyrrhic. God patiently awaits man's repentance in order to cover him once again with His compassion and mercy.

> ...Then he (Muḥammad) said, 'When the enemy of God, Iblīs, learned that God the All-Powerful, the Sublime, had answered my prayer and forgiven my community, he took dirt and he began pouring it on his head and making loud laments. The sight of his anguish made me laugh!'[181]

The ocean of God's mercy and forgiveness cannot be emptied. One may fall again and again, yet the heart of God does not harden. The *ḥadīth* tell the story of a certain brigand who had murdered ninety-nine people. He decided to repent but he was not sure if penitence was still possible. He inquired of a sage, ''Is then any repentance left for me?'' The sage was shocked, ''After ninety-nine murders?!'' The brigand became furious, unsheathed his sword, and killed the sage on the spot. The number of murders was now an even hundred.

Soon after, remorse set in again, and the murderer sought out another man of wisdom. ''I have killed a hundred people,'' he said, ''is there any repentance possible for me?'' ''Woe unto you!'' the wise man replied, ''who would dare interfere between you and your repentance?''

And so the wise man instructed the murderer on how to go about his penitence. He was instructed to leave his evil environment, go to another village, and worship the Lord there. He set out, but death overtook him on the way. Immediately Iblīs and the Angel of Mercy began to fight over who was to possess his soul:

> Iblīs said, 'I have power over him! He never renounced his obedience to me for an instant.' The Angel of Mercy replied, 'But he left (the village) repentant....' And so they quarrelled over him.... He (God) said, 'Go, look. Which of the two villages was the closest (to him)? Attach him to its people....' When death had appeared to him he had urged himself on. He drew near to the righteous village and put far from himself the wicked village. And so they numbered him among the people of the righteous village.[182]

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[180] Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1:334 #1052. See also Muslim, *Al-Jāmiᶜ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:61; Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, 1:52.

[181] Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:1002 #3013.

[182] *Ibid.*, 2:875 #2622.

CHAPTER TWO

IBLĪS: THE ONE-EYED

A. *The Wily Iblīs*

1. *Iblīs: Sufi assimilation and amplification of biographical data*

The preceding chapter was an attempt to construct a brief mythic biography of Iblīs based on a variety of sources ranging from the learned scripture commentaries and *ḥadīth* collections to didactic tales about the prophets who preceded the Qurʾānic revelation. The mythic personality of Iblīs was both an object of special fascination, and a catalyst for much discussion and controversy among another particular group of Muslims, those seekers for religious truth and followers of the mystic Path known as Sufis. The aim of these next two chapters, therefore, is to explore how the Iblīs motif was assimilated and fleshed out by Sufi practitioners and theorists.

There is no strict pattern of use or development; on the contrary, the rich variety of the Iblīs material reflects the complexity and depth the figure of Iblīs attains in this parallel strand of the Islamic tradition. Without doubt, there is much in the writings of the Sufis that resonates with the thematic concerns outlined in Chapter 1. Quite often, however, these resonances carry with them a new perspective unique to the Sufis, and it is this recasting of the Iblīs motif in a Sufi mold that has helped to transform the Iblīs figure into an important Islamic religious symbol.

The Sufis are not overly preoccupied with rehashing the details of Iblīs' life history; more often than not, the general outline of the myth is taken for granted, and only those particular events and details that mesh with the concerns of an individual or group of Sufis are reiterated. There is some interest shown in Iblīs' ability to take on various animal forms: dogs, frogs, pigs, monkeys, etc.[1] Occasionally he is given a different name or title that focuses on one or more of his particular characteristics, such as in Al-Makkī's work where he is called Al-Bāṭil, "The Worthless One," or in the work of Al-Kubrā where he is given the esoteric title Yūnāq, "The One Who Flatters With Ruses."[2]

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[1] Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm ad-dīn*, 5 vols., 40 books (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-istiqāma bi ʾl-Qāhira, n.d.), vol. 3, book 21, p. 40.

[2] Abū Ṭālib Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī Ibn ʿAṭīya Al-Ḥārithī Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Muṣṭafā ʾl-Bābī Al-Ḥalabī wa awlāduh, 1381 A.H. - 1961 C.E.), 1:165. Al-Makkī is referring here to the use of the title in Qurʾān 34:49; Najm Ad-Dīn Al-Kubrā, *Die fawāʾiḥ al-ǧamāl wa fawātiḥ al-ǧalāl*, p. 80 #162 and p. 87 #176 of the Arabic text.

Far more Sufi interest is manifest in Iblīs' progeny, and in the involvements of his children in man's spiritual life. To facilitate the production of these offspring, Al-Jīlānī provides Iblīs with a wife, Ash-Shayṭāna, "Lady Satan," who is formed from his left rib on the model of Eve. As a result of their union, she brings forth thirty-one eggs, from each of which hatch ten thousand male and female devils who spread over land and sea, reproducing among themselves.[3]

Al-Ghazālī proposes a similar theory with an important variation, suggesting that Satan himself lays the eggs from which his children hatch. However, Al-Ghazālī's purpose is not the communication of biographical data on the family life of Iblīs, but is, rather, an attempt to describe in mythic terms the involvement of Iblīs and his tribe in man's inner, spiritual development. The point of interest is not the fact that Satan reproduces, but that he makes his nest and lays his eggs in the hearts of men. The young devils who hatch there marry among themselves and reproduce in men's hearts at an alarming rate. They nourish their fiery essences on the lusts, desires, and passions of mankind which they consume the way fire consumes straw. Thus Al-Ghazālī transforms Iblīs' family history into a spiritual allegory on both the origins of man's impulse to sensuality, and the ultimate destruction the proliferation of these lusts and desires wreaks on man's spiritual life.[4] Every manifestation of man's passion is a renewed confirmation of humanity's brotherhood with the clan of Iblīs; "truly the wastrels are brothers of satans..." (Qurʾān 17:27).[5]

In the Qurʾān, *ḥadīth*, and related literature, particular children of Iblīs are given names and singled out because of their special duties; the Sufi writers utilize the same basic genealogical structure and expand the catalogue of names and occupations in Iblīs' growing family. Al-Ghazālī follows Aṭ-Ṭabarī and Muslim in listing Thabr, Al-Aʿwar, Dāsim, Zalanbūr, Miswaṭ and Khinzab (or Khinzib), while adding the name of Al-Walhān, the devil who disrupts ablutions.[6] Of the previous satanic creatures, Al-Makkī mentions only Khinzab, Al-Walhān, and Zalanbūr, with the occupation of each,[7] while he adds another name to the family tree, that of Al-Munāqiḍ, who continually prods men and women to talk about their good deeds so that they lose the merit they have acquired

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[3] ʿAbd Al-Qādir Al-Jīlānī, *Al-Ghunya li ṭālibī ṭarīq al-ḥaqq*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Muṣṭafā ʾl-Bābī Al-Ḥalabī wa awlāduh, 1956 C.E.-1375 A.H.), 1:100. See also Ch. 1, pp. 31-33 for other theories relating to the generative power of Iblīs.

[4] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 4, book 32, p. 75.

[5] See also Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:292.

[6] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 39; vol. 3, book 21, p. 28. See also Ch. 1, p. 32; Ch. 1, note 156.

[7] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:231-232, 2:556.

through them. Al-Munāqiḍ is so persistent that he will continue his blandishments for twenty years if there is the slightest hope of eventually snatching away someone's spiritual reward.[8]

In a short work on Iblīs attributed to Ibn ʿArabī, the same role is attributed to another devil, Al-Mutaqāḍī.[9] This work also names two other important descendants of Iblīs, ʿUtma, who urinates in the ears of those who sleep throughout the night,[10] and Kaḥīl, who induces sleep in those who are listening to the teachings of learned men or to the Friday sermon.[11]

Finally, one child is called Al-Khannās. He plays a prominent role in a story related by Farīd Ad-Dīn ʿAṭṭār in his discussion of Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī At-Tirmidhī, to which further reference will be made.[12] The name Al-Khannās, "One Who Slinks Away," harks back to the 114th chapter of the Qurʾān where it is used as a title for Iblīs.

A particularly dramatic scenario, created for a discussion of Iblīs and his progeny, appears in the work of ʿAbd Al-Qādir Al-Jīlānī. It is not clear to what extent Al-Jīlānī may be borrowing from the mythic tradition evident in both Aṭ-Ṭabarī and Al-Ghazālī. He does, however, take pains to construct on his own an impressive list of authorities to attest to the veracity of his words, culminating in the prophet's young wife, ʿĀʾisha. The inclusion in the narrative of the vivid details of Muḥammad's feverish ecstasy adds an oracular and visionary quality to the prophet's utterances, thus strengthening their grip on the reader.

ʿĀʾisha recounts the incident that occurred when an important group of companions (including four future caliphs) came to call upon the prophet.

> The messenger of God—may God bless him and grant him peace!—came out. A terrible fever had taken hold of him; the feverish sweat rolled off him like glistening pearls. Then he wiped his brow and said three times, 'May God curse the abominable one!' and bowed his head in silence. ʿAlī—may God be pleased with him!—questioned him, 'O you who are as dear to me as my father and mother, whom have you just cursed?'

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[8] Abū Ṭālib Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī Ibn ʿAṭīya Al-Ḥārithī Al-Makkī, *ʿIlm al-qulūb*, ed. ʿAbd Al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā (Cairo: Maktabat Al-Qāhira, 1384 A.H.-1964 C.E.), p. 187.

[9] Muḥyī ʾd-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, *Shajarat al-kawn* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-jumal al-miṣrīya, 1343 A.H.). Confer the appended short treatise: "Ḥikāyat Iblīs fīmā akhbara bih an-nabī ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa sallam," p. 38.

[10] See Ch. 1, note 148, for the particular *ḥadīth* in which this curious phenomenon occurs.

[11] Ibn ʿArabī, "Ḥikāyat Iblīs," p. 38.

[12] Farīd Ad-Dīn ʿAṭṭār Nayshābūrī, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, ed. Dr. Muḥammad Istiʿlāmī (Tehrān: Zawār, 1346 A.H. solar), pp. 529-531.

The prophet began to recount the tale of Iblīs' self-impregnation which resulted in his laying seven eggs containing seven child-devils, each of whom would concentrate his efforts on one segment of humanity. The first is Al-Mudaḥḥish whose charges are the learned men, *ʿulamāʾ*, whom he will seduce with all manner of sensual delights. The disruption of prayer is assigned to the devil, Ḥadīth; the bazaars are the domain of Al-Zalabnūn (Zalanbūr?), whereas the prince of cutpurses and muggers is Batr (Thabr?). Manshūṭ (Miswaṭ?) is the master of lies, gossip, and tall tales, followed by the crudest of all, Wāsim (Dāsim?), whose vulgar incitements to fornication need not be described. The seventh and last egg produced Al-Aʿwar, the protector of thieves and robbers, who convinces people that with their ill-gotten goods they will be able to ameliorate their impoverished state as well as fulfil their religious duties through almsgiving. In the end, Al-Aʿwar counsels, one can always seek repentance![13]

2. *Iblīs: spiritual and psychological theory based on ḥadīth themes*

The interest in the ongoing generation of new satanic forces, while present throughout the Sufi tradition, is not nearly as pervasive as the Sufis' preoccupation with Iblīs' intimate relationship with each and every human being. It is for this reason that there is constant reference to, and commenting upon, two particular *ḥadīth* already mentioned in Chapter 1.

The first *ḥadīth* states the fact that each person possesses his or her own personal *shayṭān* (sometimes *jinn*); this includes the prophet himself. However the difference in his case is that his personal *shayṭān* has become a Muslim and now incites him only to good.[14] This special privilege, according to Al-Muḥāsibī, should not, however, render Muḥammad complacent, for he would then be playing into the hands of Satan. Al-Muḥāsibī juxtaposes the *ḥadīth* proclaiming the conversion of Muḥammad's malevolent spirit with a Qurʾānic warning to beware the temptations of the passions lest they turn Muḥammad away from God's revelation. And, as Al-Muḥāsibī adds, if this caveat is directed to Muḥammad, the most dedicated and beloved of God's prophets, how much more must we, simple folk, avoid any false security that would induce us to put down our guard against the wiles of Satan.[15]

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[13] Al-Jīlānī, *Al-Ghunya*, 1:99-100.

[14] See Ch. 1, p. 48. See also Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:113, 1:232, 2:500; Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 3, book 21, pp. 27-28; Al-Jīlānī, *Al-Ghunya*, 1:100.

[15] Abū ʿAbd Allāh Al-Ḥārith Ibn Asad Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb ar-riʿāya li ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. Margaret Smith (London: Luzac and Co., 1940), p. 112. See also Qurʾān 5:49. Al-Muḥāsibī later equates this grace of constant vigilance with the gift of impeccability (*ʿiṣma*) afforded to the prophets. See p. 114.

It is the second *ḥadīth*, however, that, without doubt, attracts primary interest: "truly Satan flows in man's very bloodstream."[16] The Sufi voices resound in unison proclaiming this subtle insight into human psychology. No man or woman is exempt, they say, for Satan fills human hearts the way air fills an empty bowl.[17]

The Sufi theorists are not content, however, to speak only in general, abstract terms about Iblīs' presence at the core of man's being. They see his presence in man to be analogous to, and, as will be seen presently, mythically symbolized by the ingestion of food, one of the most basic and concrete of human processes. Al-Makkī bases this link between ingesting food and Satan's interior presence on the prohibition to Moses in the Torah from eating animal veins.[18] Both Al-Makkī and Al-Ghazālī quote expanded versions of this *ḥadīth*, versions which do not appear in the collections of Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, or Ibn Māja, but which tie in very well with their conviction that Iblīs' presence in man's bloodstream is directly involved with the process of eating: "truly Satan flows in man's bloodstream; make narrow his pathways through hunger and thirst."[19]

This addition adds a distinctly Sufi flavor to the *ḥadīth* by focusing attention on the need for a dedication to the ascetical life that must begin by training the body to detach itself from worldly pleasures. The choice between gluttony or fasting is thus raised to a plane of momentous spiritual significance, for to choose gluttony is to allow Satan to become flesh of one's flesh and blood of one's blood. Man's only shield is fasting, which starves the Evil One and renders him feeble.[20]

> It is related that Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham—may God's mercy be upon him!—said, 'I heard that for a day and night Iblīs looked upon Jesus—may peace be upon him!—while he (Jesus) was writhing about. He (Iblīs) said, "How is it I see you writhing about? Shall I not bring you some food?" Jesus answered, "You know well that if I said to these mountains and

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[16] See Ch. 1, p. 47. See also Abū ʿAbd Allāh Al-Ḥārith Ibn Asad Al-Muḥāsibī, *Al-Masāʾil fī aʿmāl al-qulūb wa ʾl-jawāriḥ wa ʾl-makāsib wa ʾl-ʿaql*, ed. ʿAbd Al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā (Cairo: ʿĀlam al-kutub, 1969 C.E.), p. 81; Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:195, 1:232, 2:346; Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 1, book 6, pp. 231-232; vol. 3, book 21, p. 29; vol. 3, book 21, p. 36; vol. 4, book 32, p. 74; Al-Jīlānī, *Al-Ghunya*, 1:98, 1:101; ʿAlī Ibn ʿUthmān Al-Jullābī Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, ed. V. Schukovski (Leningrad: Dār al-ʿulūm-i ittiḥād-i jamāhīr-i shūravī-yi sūsiyālīstī, 1344 A.H. lunar-1304 A.H. solar-1926 C.E.), p. 308.

[17] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 4, book 32, p. 74.

[18] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:195.

[19] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:195, 2:346; Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 1, book 6, pp. 231-232. Al-Ghazālī's version mentions only hunger and not thirst. An editor's note in this edition of the *Iḥyāʾ* seems to confirm that the second part of this *ḥadīth* is not found in the standard manuals of *ḥadīth*. See vol. 1, book 6, p. 232.

[20] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 1, book 6, pp. 231-232; vol. 1, book 10, p. 337; vol. 3, book 21, p. 29.

valleys: 'Become food for me, with God's permission!' truly they would be. But you are my enemy, and my lower soul is your spy within me. However, I am starving out the spy and weakening it, that it may no longer possess the strength to pass on news about me to you. Truly my going hungry infuriates you! I wish nothing else from the world; and in this state of hunger I recite:

I realize that a small loaf
and cup of Euphrates water overpowers hunger;
I realize, too, that hunger is a help in prayer,
and that a full stomach helps only to lethargy.'' ''[21]

The belief that gluttonous excess affords Satan the opportunity to inhabit and take control of man's innermost being is a theme that is equally prominent in the work of the later Persian Sufis, Rūmī and ʿAṭṭār in particular. Rūmī reserves his most shocking poem devoted to Iblīs for a description of a gourmand of lust who has given himself over wholeheartedly to oral pleasures, ''Satan's fodder.'' Once he is fully enmeshed in this web of desire, his human dignity and spiritual worth vanish; the wretched soul is left grovelling before his devil-master like a catamite. Resolutions to fast are of no avail for the ''nose-bag'' of Iblīs has been tied to his face. Up to the moment when the death rattle finally springs from his throat, his mouth continues to reek from the tart and fetid odor of bad vinegar, like the mouth of Iblīs.[22]

Rūmī's use of imagery borders on the grotesque; nevertheless, the revulsion elicited from the listener is meant to act as a catalyst for positive change. The aim is to shock the sensualist into pulling himself from the mire created by a life dedicated to mindless lust. As Rūmī advises elsewhere:

Wean your infant soul from the devil's milk;
afterwards make it join company with the angel.[23]

ʿAṭṭār chooses for his medium the mythic fable of Iblīs and Al-Khannās' encounter with Adam and Eve, a fable attributed by ʿAṭṭār to Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī At-Tirmidhī. This finely woven didactic tale is an ambitious attempt to explain in cosmic terms Iblīs' becoming a permanent part of mankind's flesh and blood at the dawn of creation. Moreover the myth vividly dramatizes the particular *ḥadīth* under discussion without ever making specific reference to it.

The scene is set after the confrontation of Adam and Eve with Iblīs. Adam and Eve have made their peace with God and are busily engaged

[21] Al-Makkī, *ʿIlm al-qulūb*, p. 216.

[22] Jalāl Ad-Dīn Rūmī, *Kullīyāt-i dīwān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, ed. Badīʿ Az-Zamān Furūzānfar and ʿAlī Dashtī (Tehrān: Amīr Kabīr, 1336 A.H. solar; reprint ed., 1351 A.H. solar), pp. 1065-1066 #2879. The almost identical poem can be found on p. 1203 #3250.

[23] Jalāl Ad-Dīn Rūmī, *Mathnawī-yi maʿnawī*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (Tehrān: Amīr Kabīr, 1336 A.H. solar; reprint ed., 1353 A.H. solar), Book 1, l. 1640, p. 81.

in the tasks of everyday life. One day Adam goes off to work and Iblīs comes to visit Eve, bringing along his little son, Al-Khannās.

> Iblīs said, 'Something important has come up. Please watch my son until I come back.' Eve agreed and Iblīs went on his way. When Adam came back, he asked, 'Who is this?' She said, 'It is the child of Iblīs; he has been left in my care.' Adam reproached her, 'Why did you agree?' He flew into a rage, killed the child, chopped him into pieces, and hung each piece from the branch of a tree. Iblīs came back and asked, 'Where is my child?' Eve told the whole story: 'He has been cut into pieces and each piece has been hung from the branch of a tree.' Iblīs called out to his child and he was joined back together. Alive once again, he stood before Iblīs. Another time he addressed Eve: 'Here, take him; I have something else important to do.' Eve refused. He kept after her with entreaty and lament until she agreed. Then Iblīs went on his way. Adam returned and asked her, 'Who is this?' Eve told the whole story. Adam berated her and said, 'I do not know what the secret is in this affair. My order you reject, but the one from God's enemy you accept, and you are beguiled by his words!' Thereupon he killed the child and burned him. Half of his ashes he threw into the water and half he flung to the winds; then he left.

Iblīs returns and the same scenario is acted out once again. He resurrects his son from the ashes and asks Eve to watch over him; she refuses, for now she fears Adam's wrath even more: "He will destroy me!" she pleads. But Iblīs reassures her and she capitulates, unable to resist his power. Adam returns and is both baffled and furious. He wonders how long this will go on. At wit's end, Adam resolves to devise a permanent solution.

> Adam killed Khannās and fried him; he ate half himself and gave Eve the other half to eat.... When Iblīs returned and asked for his child, Eve recounted the whole tale: 'He killed him and fried him; I ate half and Adam half.' Iblīs said, 'This was exactly my intention, in order that I might have access to man's interior! Since his breast is now my abode, my goal is achieved.'[24]

This fable is a masterful recapitulation of traditional themes that go back to the earliest texts: Satan has mingled himself within the fabric of each human entity and will continue to do so. And this mingling mythically arises from, and is actually symbolized by, the eating process. ʿAṭṭār's version adds a unique irony of its own, for it implies that the sharing of "sacred" food possesses numinous, even transforming, power; yet here the food is the food of death, not life, and the transformation effected is a spiritual degradation similar to the mutation suffered by Iblīs after his refusal to bow to Adam. While the myth is seductive

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[24] ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, pp. 529-531.

because of the levels of interpretation it allows, its central focus is, without doubt, the need felt to explain Iblīs' link with the human person.[25]

All the imagery examined thus far used by Sufis to describe Iblīs' presence within the human person has been extremely concrete: flowing blood, veins, food, gluttony, starvation, etc. There is, in addition, a parallel tradition that views the interiorization of Satan from a more abstract and distinctively psychological perspective. It integrates the Iblīs motif into a highly sophisticated analysis of the complex phenomena observable in man's interior struggle with conflicting drives to good and evil. The Sufis' long-range goal was to provide a psychological schema that would enable the *murīd*, spiritual novice, to understand the different movements of spiritual forces within his heart. And by means of this new insight, the novice would, hopefully, achieve progress along the mystic Path, always, of course, under the direction of a *shaykh*, a spiritual master.

The interior arena in which the battle is fought is man's heart (*qalb*); the two warring factions are God, often represented by his angel (*malak*), and the enemy (*ʿadū*).[26] Each side strives to win over the individual through cajoling, reasoned argument, desire, the senses, etc. As Al-Ghazālī confirms, neither camp has the advantage at the outset. However, if the individual leans toward the allurements of the enemy, his heart becomes Iblīs' nest; if he staunchly adheres to the good, the angels will make his heart their resting place.[27]

The heart is a volatile, yet fragile, instrument, easily disturbed, even disfigured. It is likened to a fluttering bird, a boiling pot, or a feather lying on the desert floor, tossed about aimlessly by the winds.[28] There are, generally speaking, four types of hearts: 1) a heart with a lamp shining brightly within it, i.e., the heart of the true believer; 2) a black,

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[25] While it is true that the images under discussion are the principal ones used by many Sufi writers to describe the presence of Satan within man, there are, of course, others that appear with a certain frequency. Rūmī talks of Satan being lodged under man's skin (*Mathnawī*, Book 2, l. 639, p. 230), while ʿAṭṭār speaks elsewhere of the foolishness of blaming an exterior Satan for one's ills, since the true enemy is found by looking in the mirror (*Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, pp. 737-738). Abū Bakr Muḥammad Al-Kalābādhī expresses the same theme: "The man of fear is one who fears himself more than he fears the enemy" (*Kitāb at-taʿarruf li madhhab ahl at-taṣawwuf*, ed. ʿAbd Al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Ṭaha ʿAbd Al-Bāqī Sarūr [Cairo: ʿĪsā ʾl-Bābī Al-Ḥalabī, 1380 A.H.-1960 C.E.], p. 97). So, too, in Al-Kubrā: "Know that the lower soul, Satan, the angel—these are not things outside of you, rather you are they..." (*Die fawāʾiḥ al-ǧamāl wa fawātiḥ al-ǧalāl*, p. 32 #67 of the Arabic text.

[26] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:232; Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 27; Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 5, l. 2980-2983, p. 975.

[27] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 27.

[28] *Ibid.*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 46.

inverted heart, that of the unbeliever; 3) an uncircumcised heart, attached to its covering. This heart belongs to the hypocrite; 4) and, finally, a heart with many layers of both faith and hypocrisy. The layers of faith are like green herbs that can be nourished with fresh water and made to grow and multiply; the layers of hypocrisy are infected with sores that fester and spread with the increase of pus.[29]

The gravest illness that afflicts the heart is the sickness of sin, for each sin leaves its scar, like a black mark, on the surface of the heart. Only repentance can polish it anew and return the heart to its original lustre: "These sinful vestiges rise like black smoke to the mirror of the heart, continually accumulating there, time and time again, until the heart is blackened, obscured, and completely veiled from God Most High...."[30]

Within the arena of the heart, the satanic force is more precisely identified, from a psychological perspective, by linking it closely with the action of the *nafs*, the lower soul:

> The *nafs* and Satan have been one from the very beginning,
> and have been envious and hostile to Adam (i.e. mankind).[31]

The Sufi writers vacillate between ascribing total identity to the *nafs* and Iblīs, or declaring the *nafs* to be simply Satan's instrument: "...for it (the *nafs*) is a greater enemy to you than Iblīs himself, and Iblīs gains power over you only by means of it and your consent to it."[32] The question is never fully resolved, nor, frankly, is there any need to align oneself completely with either position, for both are true in that they reflect the two characteristics of immanence and independence manifested by the Prince of Evil, Iblīs.

Nafs is by no means a univocal term; it has undergone differing analyses and descriptions throughout the Muslim tradition. Nevertheless, the predominant Sufi approach is to see the *nafs* as the origin and seat of all blameworthy impulses.[33] The lower soul possesses four distinctly negative characteristics: 1) a propensity to arrogant self-

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[29] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:233; similarly in Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 12.

[30] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:232; Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 12.

[31] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 3, l. 3197, p. 541. See also Book 3, l. 4053, p. 583. A similar statement is found in Al-Hujwīrī: "For Satan, in truth, is a servant's *nafs* and passion" (*Kashf al-maḥjūb*, p. 262).

[32] These words of Al-Muḥāsibī are cited by Margaret Smith in her book on Al-Muḥāsibī's life and writings: Margaret Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad* (London: The Sheldon Press, 1935), p. 90.

[33] The Qur'ān describes three different aspects of the *nafs: an-nafs al-ammāra* (12:53), *an-nafs al-lawwāma* (75:2), and *an-nafs al-muṭma'inna* (89:27). See Al-Ghazālī's discussion of these various understandings of the *nafs* and his conclusion that the Sufis see it predominantly in a negative light, *an-nafs al-ammāra*. Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 4.

inflation, bordering on self-divinization; 2) a leaning towards deception, ruse, envy, and suspicion; 3) a bestial instinct for excessive food, drink, and sex; 4) and, finally, with all this, it claims to be a devoted servant of God![34]

The wiliness of the *nafs* rivals the wiliness of Iblīs himself. Rūmī compares the Iblīs-*nafs* to the innocent looking hedgehog who but rarely sticks his head out of the burrow for fear of the hunter. When the right opportunity presents itself, however, spines erect, the hedgehog sallies forth. At such a time even the snake is no match for him.[35]

The combat that rages between Iblīs-*nafs* and God-*malak* in the arena of the heart (*qalb*) demands weapons; they are the various ideas, impulses, and notions (usually called *khawāṭir* or *khaṭarāt*, the singular being *khāṭir*) that arise in the heart at the insistence of one or the other side. These impulses are neither spiritually beneficial nor blameworthy in themselves since they do not arise out of any free choice on the part of the individual. Reward or punishment depends, rather, on one's subsequent actions.[36]

The *khawāṭir* vary, of course, in type and intensity. Many Sufis believe that it is possible to trace a particular *khāṭir* back to its particular source because of the nature of the act suggested. However, there are often occasions so ambiguous that it is almost impossible to reach a decision whether the *khāṭir* arises from Iblīs, the *nafs*, God, the *malak*, or a combination of these. A thorough, schematic analysis is, therefore, difficult to construct; Al-Kalābādhī, however, offers a helpful beginning:

> Some *shaykhs* claim that there are four types of impulses: an impulse from God, an impulse from the angel, an impulse from the lower soul, and an impulse from the enemy. The one from God is a warning; the one from the angel urges obedience; the one from the lower soul is the call to passion, and the one from the enemy is the embellishment of sin.[37]

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[34] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:177.

[35] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 3, l. 4058-4062, p. 584.

[36] Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb ar-riᶜāya*, pp. 44-45; Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 3, book 21, pp. 41-42.

[37] Al-Kalābādhī, *Kitāb at-taᶜarruf*, p. 90.

Again it must be noted that the Sufis are not in total agreement about the general types and sources of *khawāṭir* encountered within the heart. A second interesting schema is offered by Al-Jīlānī in which there are six, rather than four, basic types of impulses emanating from six different sources: the lower soul, Satan, the spirit (*rūḥ*), the angel, the intellect (*ᶜaql*), and the realm of certitude (*yaqīn*). The impulse of the lower soul incites to passions both licit and illicit, while the notions of Satan involve unbelief and associationism as well as complaints and doubts about God's promises. Satan also encourages joy in sinning and procrastination in repentance. In opposition to the lower soul and Satan, the spirit and angel urge people back to the truth and to obedience to God. The intellect works for both sides, sometimes ordering what Satan and the lower soul desire, sometimes aligning itself with the spirit and angel. The urgings that spring from the realm of

Not only do the types of impulses differ depending on whether they originate, in broad terms, from the good or from evil, but their nature and intensity may differ depending on their particular good or evil source. Here, Al-Junayd is our guide:

> The difference between it (i.e., the impulse arising from Satan) and the one arising from the lower soul is that the urging of the lower soul continues to plague the individual and does not go away, while the one from Satan goes for a while and then returns to attack.... This satanic impulse takes shape and descends unexpectedly upon a man's intellect while the impulse of the lower soul is continuous, moving naturally towards passion or ease.

Nevertheless, Al-Junayd makes the point that one should not be misled into supposing that the impulses of the lower soul are more dangerous because of their enduring quality; on the contrary, it is in the lightning attack of Satan that man suffers the greatest spiritual harm.[38] Najm Ad-Dīn Al-Kubrā compares the lower soul to a young adolescent whom Satan beguiles and seduces with his endless supply of debilitating desires.[39] The lower soul, therefore, is no match for Iblīs, nor can it outdo him in evil *khawāṭir*. Regarding the efficacy and power of the urgings of God and the angel, Al-Junayd does not distinguish between these two spiritual forces, but prefers to mention two characteristics common to all desires emanating from the good: they are always in accordance with the Law, and they are embraced with great reluctance.[40]

It is quite possible to analyze in some detail the complete psychological process by which the initial impulse (*khāṭir*) is brought to actualization in a concrete act. This would, however, take us too far afield from our main discussion. It is worthwhile, nonetheless, to take note of the broad lines of the process as laid out by Al-Ghazālī.

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certitude are imbued with the spirit of faith and true knowledge because they come from God Himself. See Al-Jīlānī, *Al-Ghunya*, 1:101-102.

A third catalogue and description of *khawāṭir* and their origins is proposed by An-Niffarī. See Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd Al-Jabbār An-Niffarī, "Kitāb mawqif al-mawāqif" in *Trois œuvres inédites de mystiques musulmans*, ed. Paul Nwyia (Beirut: Dār el-machreq, 1973), pp. 315-316 #161.

[38] Abū ʾl-Qāsim Al-Junayd, *The Life, Personality, and Writings of Al-Junayd*, ed. and tr. Dr. Ali Hasan Abdel-Kader (London: Luzac and Co., n.d.; reprint ed., London: Luzac and Co., 1976), p. 61 of the Arabic text.

ʿAṭṭār quotes Al-Junayd saying substantially the same thing: "The difference between the impulses of the lower soul and the temptations of Satan is that when the lower soul importunes and you refuse, it keeps coming back, even though some time has passed, until it achieves its end. As for Satan, when he tempts, if you oppose him, he abandons that particular enticement" (*Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, p. 437).

[39] Najm Ad-Dīn Al-Kubrā, *Die fawāʾiḥ al-ǧamāl wa fawātiḥ al-ǧalāl*, pp. 13-14 #33 of the Arabic text.

[40] Abū ʾl-Qāsim Al-Junayd, *The Life, Personality, and Writings of Al-Junayd*, p. 61 of the Arabic text.

First there is the *khāṭir* which arises from its good or evil source and induces the *mayl*, inclination, to a particular action. The inclination must be fortified by *al-iʿtiqād*, the conviction to act, which culminates in the formation of a concrete intention or plan of action, *al-hamm*.[41] Elsewhere Al-Ghazālī describes the process in similar fashion, using, however, different terminology: the notion or impulse, *khāṭir*, sets desire, *raghba*, in motion. Desire in turn prompts firm intention and resolution, *ʿazm*, which steers the direction of the will, *nīya*, towards the movement of body members, *aʿḍāʾ*.[42]

The Sufi *shaykhs* sense the danger that the abstract psychological discussions revolving around the *khawāṭir* may distract the initiate from focusing on the personal concerns that sparked the original inquiry. They are determined that the *murīd*, novice, should grow to understand the source and meaning of the various impulses and movements he experiences, personally, within himself. To avoid this pitfall, Sufi masters strive to link the abstract term and its significance to more concrete, traditional concepts. The most successful is, perhaps, the equation of the negative *khawāṭir* with the Qurʾānic *waswasa*, the whispered temptations of Iblīs.[43]

> The messenger of God—may God bless him and grant him peace!—mentioned the meaning of *waswasa*. It comprises the notions (*khawāṭir*) that come to the mind of the struggling wayfarer.... And every notion has a cause which requires a name. The name of the cause of this notion is Satan, and it is not conceivable that a man can be separated from him.[44]

Not only must the novice be able to recognize and identify the various forces that are known to make war within the heart, but he must also develop the skill to sort them out as they actually vie for superiority within his own spirit: no mean task considering the confusion of desires, feelings, and suggestions each person encounters within himself. At all cost, however, the man of faith must learn to distinguish between the visit of the angel and the visit of the enemy, between the suggestions of the spirit and the whisperings of the lower soul, between the knowledge of certitude and the formulations of the human intellect.[45]

Al-Makkī offers general guidelines: suggestions that occur urging one to good—these are worthy of notice; those that preoccupy and upset the heart, especially on account of past events and future concerns—such suggestions should be recognized as satanic *waswasa*, intended only to

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[41] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 41.
[42] *Ibid.*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 27.
[43] The root *WSWS* occurs three times in the Qurʾān: 7:20, 20:120, 114:4-5.
[44] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 29.
[45] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:263.

short-circuit one's devotion. Be prepared for the more subtle assaults of Iblīs; for example, do not labor over the where, when, or why of beneficial spiritual states, because in the process they will slip away. If one keeps up this fight against the enemy, God will grant as reward the prayer of intimacy and the gift of hostility to Iblīs.[46]

Al-Ghazālī takes a more direct tack: to overcome excessive *waswasa*, bar the doors of the impulses, *khawāṭir*, i.e., of the five senses through which desires and attachments find their way into the heart. Not only must an ascetical attitude be cultivated towards family and earthly goods, but also must the intensity of one's fantasy life be neutralized through strenuous effort and reliance on God.[47]

These are by no means the only ascetical tools available to those struggling to develop a sensitivity towards discerning the movements of the interior spirits; the process of discovering new tools continues throughout one's journey along the Path. Al-Muḥāsibī describes it well:

> It is like someone who is in great darkness going along the road.... His eyes are of no use to him without a lamp, nor is the lamp of any use to him without healthy vision. Neither sight nor the lamp are of any use to him if he does not throw his gaze to where he puts his foot, and proceed with caution. And if he looks up into the sky or turns around, even if his sight is sound and his lamp is shining brightly, he will be like someone with neither sight nor lamp. And if he casts a glance towards the ground without his lamp with him, he will be like someone without sight. Healthy vision is much like the intellect, and the lamp like knowledge. And looking with caution is much like careful procedure in the intellect, seeking to obtain insight through knowledge, and turning attention to what comes to mind in accord with the Qurʾān and *sunna*....[48]

3. *Iblīs: the world and other ploys*

The nature of Iblīs' involvement with mankind is, in the Sufi world view, not limited to man's physical and psychological make-up. He is encountered on the exterior as well as the interior plane, and this exterior plane is clearly identifiable.

> Iblīs said to his devils, 'Something has happened! Go, see what it is.' And so they hurried about until they were worn out. They returned and said, 'What do we know?' Iblīs retorted, 'I will bring you back the story!' and off he went. When he returned he said, 'God has sent forth Muḥammad' (may God bless him and grant him peace!). He (Iblīs) began sending out devils to the companions of the prophet—may God bless him and grant him peace!—but they (the devils) kept turning away, disappointed, saying, 'We have never associated with people like this before! We win over some of

[46] *Ibid.*, 2:209-210.
[47] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 30.
[48] Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb ar-riʿāya*, pp. 45-46.

> them but then they perform their prayers and all that is wiped away.' Iblīs said to them, 'Take it little by little with them. Perhaps God will open the world up to them and we will get what we want from them.'[49]

The world, *ad-dunyā*, is the term employed to describe the exterior domain of Iblīs. So intimate is the union between him and the world that they are occasionally identified:

> The equivalent of the world is Iblīs. God created him to set him apart and curse him, that He (God) might afflict him, and that he (Iblīs) might afflict others; that He (God) might destroy him, and that he (Iblīs) might destroy others.[50]

The world is described as rotting carrion, a dead corpse with a dog, i.e., Iblīs, perched on top. God allows anyone who shows any interest in this lifeless carcass to become the portion of Iblīs.[51] Rūmī borrows the same image and compares Iblīs to a vicious dog lying at the door of a Turkoman's tent (i.e., at God's threshold) awaiting his master's permission to pounce on the unwary stranger.

> O devil-dog, put (them) to the test, so that
> (you find out) how these people proceed along this Path.
> Charge them, obstruct them, be watchful,
> so (you find out) who plays the woman with regard to uprightness and who the man.[52]

The dog image finds its roots in Iblīs' words in the Qurʾān where he resolves to waylay mankind in the Righteous Path.[53] His skill is demonstrated most effectively in his ability to turn man from the road leading to thankfulness[54] and repentance.[55] There are other roads, too, that he frequents. He waylays non-Muslims on the road to Islam, asking them, "How can you discard the faith of your fathers?" In similar fashion Iblīs blocks the progress of those who embark on the roads of *hijra* (emigration) or *jihād* (holy war), and instills doubts in their hearts: "How can you abandon the lands you know so well, or leave your women and property unprotected, vulnerable, ripe for rape and pillage?"[56]

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[49] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 34.

[50] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:495.

[51] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:495; ʿAbd Ar-Raḥmān Badawī, *Shaṭaḥāt aṣ-ṣūfīya*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat an-nahḍat al-miṣrīya, 1949 C.E.), vol. 1: *Abū Yazīd Al-Biṣṭāmī*, p. 169.

[52] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 5, l. 2951-2952, p. 974.

[53] See Qurʾān 7:16 and Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 1, l. 2948-2949, p. 146.

[54] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:414; Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 4, book 32, p. 80.

[55] Abū Saʿīd Al-Kharrāz, *The Book of Truthfulness* (*Kitāb aṣ-ṣidq*), ed. and tr. A. J. Arberry (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 15 of the Arabic text; Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 4, l. 3383-3387, p. 793.

[56] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:231; the same is repeated in Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 29.

The ability to waylay and trap victims is not the sole prerogative of the Iblīs-dog figure; the image of the hunter mirrors the same qualities. Consequently the hunter wielding his snare is also a frequent figurative representation for Iblīs' manipulation of the world and its inhabitants.

> O distinguished fellow, commit no sin lest you acquire a bad name;
> if you are exalted and you sin, you become lowly.
> Iblīs has placed a snare on the road you travel;
> become not an evildoer lest you end up in the snare.[57]

The hunter is so sly and cunning in the way he stalks his victim that the prey never catches sight of him. Yet Iblīs is always there, patiently awaiting one careless move by his victim. It is at that moment that he strikes, dragging his prey to perdition and the everlasting fires.[58] Do not underestimate the power of his spells, for no one escapes him, neither one as crafty as the serpent, nor one as swift and elusive as running water.[59]

Despite his initial success with Adam and his descendants, Iblīs is not satisfied with the snares God provides; he continually importunes the Lord for more and more deadly traps. His constant cry is, "Grant me more!"[60] Many of these satanic stratagems have already been encountered directly or indirectly in the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* literature discussed in Chapter 1. There are, however, many others that attest to the subtle ingenuity of Iblīs and his fertile imagination; these will be examined shortly. Man's passions, *al-ahwāʾ*, seem to provide him with a limitless source of material for creating new enticements and worldly idols to which men will bind themselves in blind devotion.[61]

> There are some people who are in love with their passions, or with Iblīs, the enemy of God, who urges them to greater ignorance and continued heedlessness of the love of God Most High.
>
> Some of our learned men related that Abū Muḥammad was chided for addressing everyone as 'O lover!'. And I said to him, 'This fellow is not a lover as you say.' He whispered secretly in my ear, 'This is no empty saying, whether the man be a believer or hypocrite. For if he is a believer, he is a lover of Almighty God; if he is a hypocrite, he is a lover of Iblīs.'[62]

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[57] Rūmī, *Kullīyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, *rubāʿī* # 1722, p. 1469.

[58] Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb ar-riʿāya*, p. 113. Rūmī echoes a similar warning in *Mathnawī*, Book 3, l. 2855-2861, pp. 523-524.

[59] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 5, l. 165-166, p. 828.

[60] See Ch. 1, p. 40 for Ath-Thaʿlabī's version of this dialogue between Iblīs and God concerning Iblīs' desire for more potent snares with which to entrap mankind. The same dialogue is repeated in Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 39. Rūmī appears to take this story as the basis for a conversation he creates between Iblīs and God in *Mathnawī*, Book 5, l. 940-961, pp. 867-868.

[61] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 1, book 4, p. 167; vol. 3, book 21, p. 35.

[62] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:162.

The works of Satan discussed by the Sufis which resonate most closely with the *ḥadīth*, deal with human praxis, especially external religious obligations. The Sufis warn that Satan's aim is to entice man into a situation where, because of forgetfulness, haste, or confusion due to other distractions, he will perform all manner of religious and social acts in a forbidden way.[63] These actions range from the simple concerns over bodily cleanliness (e.g., cleanliness of the fingernails upon which Satan will perch if they are not kept short)[64] to the more elaborate ritual prescriptions which precede prayer,[65] sex,[66] and other important human involvements.

Not only Satan's perversion of ritual actions preceding prayer, but also his efforts to subvert the act of prayer itself occupy the minds of Sufi theoreticians. They reiterate the traditionists' injunction to ward off those who would interrupt one's prayer, be they spirits or humans, for those disruptive sorts are recognized to be soldiers of Iblīs.[67]

References to particular *ḥadīth* included in the compilations of Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and Ibn Māja also occur in Sufi discussions of sleep, e.g., the *ḥadīth* of the knotted cord and the *ḥadīth* concerning Satan's urinating in the ear of the man who sleeps the whole night through.[68] The meaning of this latter *ḥadīth* becomes clearer in this Sufi context since it is associated with the recommendation of night prayers, vigils, and the like. If one is so sluggish as not to awaken even once to remember God, he may suffer the same bizarre fate as that of the man in the *ḥadīth*.

This disdain of sleep is common among both Sufis and traditionists; however, Al-Hujwīrī does not hesitate to point out that a definite difference of opinion exists among the followers of the mystic Path. Those who would take a stance in opposition to the low regard for sleep claim that it is a state of moral suspension in which the Sufi performs neither

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[63] Abū ʿAbd Allāh Al-Ḥārith Ibn Asad Al-Muḥāsibī, *Al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd Al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā (Cairo: Maṭbaʿa Muḥammad ʿAlī Ṣabīḥ wa awlāduh, 1384 A.H.-1965 C.E.), pp. 61-62; *Al-Masāʾil fī aʿmāl al-qulūb*, p. 81; Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:359.

[64] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 1, book 3, p. 141.

[65] "When an ignorant, forgetful man goes to perform his ablutions, devils swarm around him like bees around a drop of honey...." (Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:198).

[66] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:525; see also Ch. 1, p. 50.

[67] Al-Muḥāsibī, *Al-Waṣāyā*, p. 94; Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:210; Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 1, book 4, p. 164. Al-Ghazālī lists the specific satanic afflictions (nosebleed, drowsiness, itching, etc.) that disturb the individual during prayer in *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 1, book 4, p. 157.

[68] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:86; Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 1, book 10, p. 353. See also Ch. 1, p. 50.

In both Al-Makkī and Al-Ghazālī these *ḥadīth* references are joined to a curious tradition describing Satan's use of snuff, an electuary, and powder with which he afflicts man. The snuff disturbs his disposition, while the electuary sharpens his tongue. When Satan sprinkles the powder over him, it causes the person to sleep from night to morning light.

good nor evil since his free will is temporarily non-functional. Consequently, these *shaykhs* do not consider sleep to be a time of heightened satanic activity. On the contrary, it is often the time for visionary experience; Iblīs must wait for the return of the waking state to resume his seductions.

> Ibn ʿAbbās said, 'There is nothing more annoying to Iblīs than the sleep of a sinner. Whenever the sinner falls asleep, he says, "When will he be awake and get up so that he may defy God?" '[69]

A further echo from the *ḥadīth* literature is apparent in the Sufi interest in the rising and setting of the sun between the horns of Satan, and the localization of the source of discord (*fitna*) and sectarian disputes in the Eastern regions from where the sun rises.[70] Al-Makkī points to divisiveness and innovation (*bidʿa*) as the most destructive of sins. They harden the hearts of those who succumb to them, making repentance impossible, and rendering men and women totally malleable for Iblīs to manipulate at will.[71]

A final theme with roots in the human praxis of the *ḥadīth* literature is reflected in the Sufi regard for honesty and uprightness in commercial transactions, as well as in their warnings against excessive concern for one's material well-being. Al-Makkī advises the honest merchant to be ever vigilant lest he succumb to the corrupt bargains of Iblīs.[72] Neither should he be the first in the bazaar nor the last to leave, for Satan was born and grew up in that very place; thus the merchant would be emulating the satanic life itself.[73]

This discussion of commerce is the jumping-off point for the more important Sufi analysis of the effects on mankind of greed in all its forms: the acquisition of money, honor, power—all of which leads to oppression of the weak and helpless. It is greed that is the door to the world, Al-Makkī tells us; it is greed that arises from love of the world, and this love of the world is the pinnacle of sinfulness.[74]

> And we related one of the stories of Jesus—may peace be upon him!—that he was journeying with a group of his disciples and they came upon some gold strewn on the ground. He stopped before it and said, 'This is deadly; beware of it.' Then he and his companions continued on their way. However three stayed behind on account of the gold. Two of them decided

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[69] See Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, pp. 457ff. The quotation from Ibn ʿAbbās is found on p. 458.

[70] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 1, book 4, p. 208; vol. 1, book 10, p. 338; Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:260.

[71] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:357; *ʿIlm al-qulūb*, p. 149.

[72] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:534.

[73] *Ibid.*, 2:556.

[74] *Ibid.*, 1:396.

to hand over some of it to the third that he might go buy some delicacies for them from the nearest city. Then the enemy whispered to them. 'Are you content that the money be split three ways? Kill this fellow and you can split the money in halves.' So they resolved to kill him on his return. Satan, in the meantime, came to the third fellow and whispered to him, 'Are you really content within yourself to take a third of the money? Kill the other two and all the money will be yours.' Thereupon the fellow bought poison and put it in the food. When he returned to them, the two of them fell on him and killed him. Then they sat down to eat the food. When they finished, they dropped dead.

Jesus returned from his journey and he saw them lying on the ground around the gold; the gold still as it was. His companions were astonished and said, 'What happened to these men?' And he related to them this tale.[75]

Al-Makkī and Al-Ghazālī see the all-consuming desire for material goods and worldly power as eventually blinding men to the value of poverty and asceticism. In fact most shudder in fear at any hint of want, capitulating to all of Satan's demands so long as he continues to feed their voracious appetites.[76] However, this satanic food will eventually lodge in men's throats, choking them to death.

His straw will stick in your throat for many a year.
What is this straw? Love of honor and wealth.
Wealth becomes a straw, O fickle one, when it bars
the way of the water of life into your throat.[77]

The lusting after wealth and power usually degenerates into a lusting after blood, for one can feed one's greed only at the expense of others. Oppression, therefore, must become a way of life.

Devour no one out of anger
lest God's anger devour you;
Rise above this desire for creatures' blood,
lest it come down upon your own head.
Then judgement will turn away from you,
because that satanic whisper comes not into your heart.
O you who call yourself a man,
what kind of virility is this,
that Iblīs buggers
you in this way?[78]

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[75] *Ibid.*, 1:517.

[76] *Ibid.*, 1:537; Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, vol. 1, book 10, p. 338.

[77] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 2, l. 132-133, p. 207.

[78] Rūmī, *Kullīyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, p. 299 #717. Al-Kharrāz, too, warns that man's violent rage can easily provoke the wrath of God. One should not naively believe that he can protect himself from Satan while he is angry: "Satan says, 'We never despair of the angry one from among God's servants, even if he make the dead come to life by his prayer. For a time will come when he will become infuriated; then we will lead him to whatever we want...' " (*The Book of Truthfulness* [*Kitāb aṣ-ṣidq*], pp. 15-16 of the Arabic text. The quotation is found on p. 16).

Love of excess, a sensual gourmandise, is the essence of the world's allurements. Few escape untouched, for with innocent pleasures Iblīs wears down the defenses of the believer, transforming what was, originally, a passing fancy into a compulsive addiction. Al-Muḥāsibī warns that even a simple glance of admiration at God-given beauty can be fashioned by Iblīs into a deadly arrow, capable of felling the most pious of Sufis.[79]

> I heard Abū Saʿīd Al-Kharrāz say, 'I saw Iblīs in a dream and he was walking away from me. I said to him, "Come here!" He answered, "What will I do with all of you? You have purified yourselves from the very thing I use to deceive people!" I said, "What is it?" He replied, "The world." As he moved away from me, he wheeled around and said, "Except that I still have one subtle allurement in store for you." I asked, "What is it?" He said, "The companionship of youths." ' And Abū Saʿīd said, 'There are few Sufis untainted by this.'[80]

4. *Iblīs: refuge from Satan the Stoned*

In the same way that the Sufi writings reflect the preoccupations of the *ḥadīth* manuals with Iblīs' involvements in mankind's practical and ritual life, they also propose similar remedies, especially those linked with sacred word: "It is said that the protections from Iblīs offered the believer number four: mosques, reading the Qurʾān reflectively, prayer, and an ascetical perspective."[81] Prayer formulas are suggested whose efficacy neutralizes many satanic incursions ranging from particular confrontations (e.g., sleep apparitions)[82] to the more general assaults of Iblīs and his armies.[83] The formula "I seek refuge in God from Satan the Stoned" is singled out as especially potent, for, with each repetition of this invocation, God destroys 360 devils who have lodged in the heart of the believer.[84] Iblīs becomes so frustrated that he is reduced to begging holy men not to teach others this prayer. In exchange Iblīs offers not to oppose them in their way to perfection; few, however, accept.[85]

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[79] Abū ʿAbd Allāh Al-Ḥārith Ibn Asad Al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-mustarshidīn*, ed. ʿAbd Al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Aleppo: Maktabat al-maṭbūʿāt al-islāmīya, 1384 A.H.-1964 C.E.), p. 69.

[80] Abū ʿAbd Ar-Raḥmān As-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt aṣ-ṣūfīya*, ed. Nūr Ad-Dīn Sarība (Cairo: Dār al-kitāb al-ʿārabī bi Miṣr, 1953 C.E.-1372 A.H.), p. 232. The same basic story appears in the following: Abū ʾl-Qāsim ʿAbd Al-Karīm Al-Qushayrī, *Ar-Risālat al-qushayrīya*, 2 vols., ed. Dr. ʿAbd Al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd Ibn Ash-Sharīf (Cairo: Dār at-taʾlīf, 1385 A.H.-1966 C.E.), 1:129; ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, pp. 457-458.

[81] Al-Makkī, *ʿIlm al-qulūb*, p. 207.

[82] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:18.

[83] *Ibid.*, 1:88.

[84] Al-Jīlānī, *Al-Ghunya*, p. 98.

[85] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 37.

While different formulas possess particularly beneficial grace, the mention of any one of the names of God is sufficient to curb the power of Satan. It is related that Qays Ibn Al-Ḥajjāj said that his own *shayṭān* told him, "When I entered you, I was like a camel; now I am like a bird." Ibn Al-Ḥajjāj inquired the reason for this. "You consume me with the mention of God Most High!"[86]

> Abū Hurayra said, 'The *shayṭān* of a believer and the *shayṭān* of an unbeliever met together. The unbeliever's devil was sleek, plump, and attractive; however the believer's devil was emaciated, unkempt, and naked. The devil of the unbeliever said to the devil of the believer, "What happened to you, O emaciated one?" He replied, "I am with a man who, when he eats, pronounces God's name, and I stay hungry; when he gets dressed, he pronounces God's name, and I stay naked, and when he anoints himself, he pronounces God's name, and I remain unkempt." The other one said, "But I am with a fellow who does none of that! And so I share his food, his drink, and his clothes." '[87]

The Sufis' reliance on sacred word as a protection against Iblīs—whether it be prayer, Qurʾān recitation, the ritual mentioning of God's name (*dhikr*)—should not be equated with the use of magical incantations that somehow compel or coerce the deity to provide blessings and benefits, regardless of the interior state of the actor. On the contrary, there is considerable discussion among the Sufis about the need for right intention, and for kindling within one's heart the light of truth which will then spark one's turning to prayer, *dhikr*, the Qurʾān, etc. Prayer formulas alone, without concomitant interior dispositions, ring hollow. Al-Kharrāz is quoted as saying: "I saw Iblīs in my sleep and I grabbed my staff to strike him. But he said to me that he did not fear that; rather, he was afraid of a light that is in the heart."[88]

It is this light of truth, Al-Makkī confirms, that drives away the darkness brought on by the passions.[89] And Al-Kharrāz adds that once this light of truth has become an integral part of man's nature, it saps Iblīs of his strength and remolds a man's spirit in the image of one of God's blessed.[90] Once thus transformed, the Sufi is impelled to safeguard this light of truth with every means at his disposal.

> An important man was approaching Al-Junayd when he saw Iblīs who was fleeing from Al-Junayd's presence. When the man came before Al-Junayd, he saw that he (Al-Junayd) was boiling with anger, with fury on his face, and that he was berating someone. The man said, 'O *shaykh*, I heard that

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[86] *Ibid.*, p. 31.
[87] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[88] Al-Qushayrī, *Ar-Risālat al-qushayrīya*, 2:729-730.
[89] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:210.
[90] Al-Kharrāz, *The Book of Truthfulness* (*Kitāb aṣ-ṣidq*), pp. 62-63 of the Arabic text.

> Iblīs is more able to lay a hand on Adam's offspring during the time when they are in a fury. And you are right now in a fury, but I saw Iblīs rushing away from you!' Al-Junayd said, 'Have you not heard, and are you not aware, that I do not become angry for my own sake? But rather I become angry for the sake of Truth. Surely Iblīs at no other time flees from me in this way than at the time when I am enraged. Other people's fury is a product of their lower soul's delight. Why else would God Most High order that they say: "I take refuge in God from Satan the Stoned"? I have never needed this invocation.'[91]

Inner transformation is also the central focus in man's struggle against the *nafs* and the world. Just as the smell of the rotting world-corpse attracts the dog-*nafs*, so the removal of all his food, the passions, is the only way to drive him off. With no food available, he can be bullied and frightened by any type of *dhikr*; but if the heart is not free from satanic food, the dog will be drawn back again and again.[92] Remember, Al-Ghazālī counsels, a thief enters only a house in which there is something to steal; a heart empty of passions is empty of Satan.[93]

The attitude towards the world to be cultivated is one of detachment: an interior distancing of self from passions, desires, and addictions, as well as an external, physical removal of self from those people and places that can lead one astray.

> Between the servant and God there are four seas. Until the servant crosses them, he will not reach God. One is the world, and his boat is asceticism; another is human beings, and his boat is being far away from them; a third is Iblīs, and his boat is hatred; and the last is the passions, and his boat is resistance.[94]

A soul perfected through detachment and asceticism is neither bound by, nor subject to, the external trappings of earthly power; in fact the roles are reversed, and the wandering ascetic becomes superior even to the emperor of the world. Al-Ghazālī tells of a king who asks a mendicant whether he might provide for any of his needs. The ascetic replies, "How can I ask something of you when my power is greater than yours?" The king asks how this can possibly be true. "He to whom you are enslaved is slave to me," replies the ascetic. "You are a slave to your passion, your anger, your sex, and your stomach. I have subdued all these things and they are my slaves."[95]

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[91] ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, p. 426.

[92] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 37.

This injunction to empty the heart of passion is reinforced by both Al-Muḥāsibī and Al-Kharrāz. See Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb ar-riʿāya*, p. 332; Al-Kharrāz, *The Book of Truthfulness* (*Kitāb aṣ-ṣidq*), pp. 14-15 of the Arabic text.

[93] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 28.

[94] ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, p. 437.

[95] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 4, book 32, p. 79.

Even what appears small and insignificant must be an object of detachment. Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham was once travelling in the desert, depending on God to provide for his needs. But for three days he found no food. Iblīs would not leave him in peace; he plagued him with memories of his former kingship and urged him to provide food and shelter for himself. Ibrāhīm begged God for help, and a voice whispered to him to throw away what he carried in his pocket. Astonished, Ibrāhīm searched and found a small quantity of silver he had forgotten was there. As soon as Ibrāhīm cast the silver away, Iblīs was seized with terror and fled, and food appeared from the invisible world.[96]

Finally, one must be detached even from those aspects of life that are in no way blameworthy. This is especially true of one's good deeds which can easily become objects of pride and boasting. Al-Kalābādhī and Al-Kharrāz insist that a person keep his positive accomplishments to himself; this is the sign of the truly altruistic man whose acts are directed to God alone. Of course Iblīs is not content to allow this to come to pass. He will take twenty years, if need be, to persuade a man to reveal his good works, in the process depriving him of much of the merit acquired in the first place. Iblīs will nullify good deed after good deed, so that eventually a man is no more than a bankrupt braggart.[97]

The struggle against the Iblīs-world is not for the weak or fainthearted; nevertheless, it should not frighten away those who do not believe they are as strong as the *shaykhs* of old. Yaḥyā Ibn Muʿādh offers those embarking on the Path this advice:

> Seek not the world; but if that is unavoidable, seek it but do not focus your will on it. But if that is unavoidable, focus your will on it but do not love it. But if that is unavoidable, love it but dwell not contentedly in it, for even if provisions come from it, your resting place is elsewhere. It is said that the Creator willed the creation of Iblīs, but He did not love it, and He willed to create Adam and He loved it. The happy man is he in whom love and will join together.[98]

Instead of being overawed by the success of God's saints, the novice is encouraged to take hope in the fact that some have been able, gradually, to gain control over their attachments, even achieving a point of *fanāʾ*, a passing away from all that is not God. Al-Kalābādhī offers the words of Abū Ḥāzim as example:

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[96] ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, p. 122.

[97] See Al-Kalābādhī, *Kitāb at-taʿarruf*, p. 99; Al-Kharrāz, *The Book of Truthfulness* (*Kitāb aṣ-ṣidq*), p. 6 of the Arabic text. See also Ch. 2, pp. 58-59 where this task is assigned to the devil Munāqid.

[98] Al-Makkī, *ʿIlm al-qulūb*, p. 194.

> What is the world? As for the things that have passed away, they are dreams; as for the things that remain, they are longings and illusions. What is Satan, that he should be feared? When he is obeyed, he profits not, and when he is disobeyed, he harms not.

It is as if, Al-Kalābādhī says, neither the world nor Satan had any hold on him.[99]

The detachment of the Sufi is a radical freedom from all that encumbers and hinders progress along the mystic Path. To Iblīs, this detachment is a thick, impenetrable wall, almost impossible to breach; his blandishments appear childish and feeble when they encounter such resistance.

> Ḥātim said, 'Every morning Iblīs comes to me and whispers, "Today, what will you eat?" I say, "Death." He says, "What will you wear?" I say, "A shroud." He says, "Where will you be?" I say, "In the grave." He says, "What a disagreeable fellow you are!" Then he leaves me and goes.'[100]

5. *Iblīs: the manipulation of the good*

The Iblīs whose progress has been studied thus far in Chapter 2 is a figure whose roots spring from, and are closely entwined with, the traditions and myths compiled in the manuals of *ḥadīth* and recounted in the Qurʾān commentaries. At the hands of the Sufis, the Iblīs motif has undergone development and amplification, and has acquired a distinctive Sufi character. There is, in addition, a whole range of Iblīs literature yet to be explored which concerns itself even more intimately with the Sufi way of life, and which adds subtlety and depth to the character of the Muslim devil figure. It is in his more devious and cunning assaults upon the Sufis that Iblīs reveals the profound and intricate facets of his personality.

No one need question Iblīs' preparedness for his chosen task; he is well-versed in all of the legal and spiritual disciplines. The most knowledgeable of creatures concerning what is *ḥalāl*, licit,[101] is Iblīs, and he is known to discourse eloquently about the seven hundred steps leading to *maʿrifa*, spiritual gnosis.[102] Consequently, Iblīs' greatest ingenuity comes to light in turning the good, in whatever shape or form it may appear, to his own perverse ends.

What is more important to a young initiate than the spiritual guidance of a master or the sound advice of an intimate friend? The *murīd* places his blind trust in such a confidant, and he can be led by such a person to

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[99] Al-Kalābādhī, *Kitāb at-taʿarruf*, p. 125.
[100] ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, p. 299.
[101] Al-Muḥāsibī, *Al-Waṣāyā*, p. 111.
[102] ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, p. 697.

spiritual advancement or eternal damnation. Feigning the role of wise, compassionate guide, Iblīs wins the heart of many a beginner; the poison, as Rūmī says, is cleverly concealed in his sugar-coated words and deeds. Only the wise will be alerted by the smell; the novice, only after the sugar-poison touches his mouth:

> Then his lips will spit it out before it reaches his gullet,
> though Satan continue to shout, 'Eat!'[103]

There is no worse enemy than the Iblīs-like friend who labors arduously to become your intimate, and then leads you astray, attests Al-Muḥāsibī. He is like a blacksmith; if he does not burn you with his sparks, his smell, in any case, will permeate you, and in time you will become like him. At the heart of this approach by Iblīs is the proven insight that like seduces like; a hunter does not attempt to trap sparrows using a crow as decoy.[104] The devastating effectiveness of this stratagem is a tribute to Iblīs' craftiness and his skill at manipulating the human personality.

> Do not listen to the blandishments of an evil friend.
> Beware! See the snare! Walk not with false security upon the earth.
> See the hundred thousand Iblīses shouting, '*lā ḥawla*!'
> O Adam, see Iblīs in the snake.
> He deceives, while saying to you, 'O dearest! O beloved!'
> so that like a butcher he may pull the skin off his beloved.[105]

Destructive as an evil and corrupt friend may be, it is possible, eventually, to pierce the façade, glimpse the true Iblīs-like face and take the necessary steps to be rid of the impostor. Iblīs, however, possesses an even more startling scheme which supersedes his previous machinations; it is to encourage people to perform actual good deeds. What is evil in this? Nothing, it seems, except that Iblīs carefully chooses to urge one on to the lesser good, and, in so doing, prevents one's turning to what might possibly be a better course of action.

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[103] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 1, l. 2584-2586, p. 128. The translation is of l. 2586.

[104] Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb ar-riʿāya*, pp. 191-193.

[105] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 2, l. 256-258, p. 213.

A phenomenon analogous to the snare of the deceiving friend occurs more properly during the prayer exercise itself; it concerns the supposed spiritual vision of God which, some claim, God grants to His loved ones after much asceticism and spiritual struggle. This spiritual intimacy, however, turns out to be nothing but intimacy with Iblīs, who has the power to appear in light and splendor upon a glorious throne in order to deceive those superficial dabblers who claim to have achieved ecstasy. See Abū Naṣr ʿAbd Allāh Ibn ʿAlī As-Sarrāj Aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Kitāb al-lumaʿ fī ʾt-taṣawwuf*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (London: Luzac and Co., 1914 C.E.; reprint ed., 1963 C.E.), pp. 428-429; a similar story occurs in Abū ʾl-Ḥasan Ad-Daylamī, *Sīrat-i Abū ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Al-Khafīf Ash-Shīrāzī*, ed. Annemarie Schimmel (Ankara: Türk tarih kurumu basimevi, 1955 C.E.), pp. 161-163.

The thought of discovering Iblīs at the heart of one's praiseworthy actions was not easy for the Sufis to accept. Al-Muḥāsibī, for his part, rejects it out of hand. In his mind, the ultimate consequence of accepting as fact the claim that Iblīs provides impetus to a spiritually beneficial course of action, would be to render futile man's efforts to discern and distinguish the particular source of the *khawāṭir*, i.e., whether they be from the angel or the lower soul. He does not deny that Iblīs may lure one away from the good. This, however, is a far cry from accepting the fact that Iblīs actively involves himself in urging the performance of what appears to be the noblest course of action.[106]

Al-Muḥāsibī's plea seems to have had no lasting impact on the minds of the Sufis, and, for this, we should be grateful, because it is in this highly ambiguous role of propagator of the good that Iblīs reveals the subtlety, depth, and tragic quality of his personality.

To what lesser goods, therefore, does Iblīs draw the Sufi? A favorite occasion for urging righteous deeds is during the time of prayer; Satan fills the mind with thoughts of the end of time and suggestions on how to minister to the needs of the community.[107] To concentrate on these good thoughts would necessitate shifting attention from the prayer, thus distracting the believer from his original task, the greater good.

Iblīs does not stop at simple suggestion; he leads one from the suggestion to the actual deed. Al-Ghazālī recounts the tale of a group of pious men who assembled for *dhikr*, the rhythmic recitation of formulas containing the divine name. Satan came to try to disrupt their prayer but to no avail; they continued their worship with greater devotion. Presently another group arrived and sat discussing various worldly topics, until a violent disagreement arose among them, resulting in a raucous battle. The group of pious believers felt the urge to intervene in the quarrel and, to this end, they broke off their prayer to rise and separate the combatants. This, of course, was the intention of Satan to begin with![108]

Iblīs weaves his finest webs around the Sufi who is well-advanced along the mystical Path, for the practiced Sufi has become immune to the cruder enticements of passion and the world. Thus, Al-Kubrā relates:

> I had devoted myself to God in solitude, and was assiduously engaged in *dhikr*, when the accursed one came along and heaped ruse after ruse upon me in order to disturb my solitude and *dhikr*. Thereupon the sword of determination appeared in my hand, inscribed from tip to hilt with the name of God. And with it I kept banishing the impulses that distracted from God. Then the notion came to mind that I ought to compose a book in solitude

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[106] Al-Muḥāsibī, *Al-Masāʾil fī aʿmāl al-qulūb*, pp. 82-83.
[107] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 1, book 4, p. 167.
[108] *Ibid.*, vol. 3, book 21, pp. 35-36.

> which I would entitle, 'The Stratagems of the Rebellious One Against the Novice.' I said to myself, 'That would not be right except with the *shaykh*'s permission.' I sought the advice of the hidden *shaykh*, and I heard his words because of the soundness of the union between him and me: 'Be done with this notion! For God has nothing to do with this idea since it is an impulse of Satan. He has enticed you into his ruse, he who has named himself the Rebellious One. Did you reckon he would not revile himself? You thought that was farfetched? His intention with that was to distract you from the mention of God, and to make the whole thing go awry.' And so I came to my senses and ended it.[109]

These encounters with Iblīs, in which he counsels to a lesser good, do not always end with the individual's becoming aware that he has been duped. There are tragic stories in which holy men are spiritually destroyed through their attachment to the lesser good, even though this attachment was spawned from a genuine spirit of altruism. The story of the monk Barṣīṣā, as recounted in Al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'*, is a fine example of the tragic fate incurred by a man who naively hoped to accomplish an important act of charity—the cure of a desperately ill girl—but who neglected to take precautions, as a monk should, against the seductive power of lust implanted by Iblīs in the human spirit.

The story opens with Satan seizing a young girl and afflicting her with a grave illness; at the same time he puts in the hearts of her family the idea that the only cure for her sickness is possessed by the monk Barṣīṣā. They go and beg him to take her in, but he refuses; however they importune him until he relents. Once he takes her into his cell, Satan fills his mind with fantasies about the young girl until he finally lies with her and she becomes pregnant. Iblīs overwhelms the monk with terror, and he urges him to kill her and bury her, lest his pernicious deed come to light. As for the family, they can be told that she has succumbed to the disease.

Not content with all the havoc he has wrought, Satan whispers to the family what has actually befallen the girl, with the result that they resolve to kill the monk. They confront him with his deed and are about to have their way with him, when Iblīs appears to the monk and says:

> 'I am the one who throttled her; I am the one who put this in the hearts of her family. Obey me and be saved, for I will rescue you from them.' 'How?' he asked. 'Bow to me twice,' and he bowed to him two times. Satan said to him, 'Truly I am quit of you!'... Take a good look now at his ruses, and his coercion of the monk into committing these heinous crimes. And all because he accepted the young girl, to cure her. Such a modest thing![110]

Not only, therefore, is the Sufi obliged to train himself to distinguish between the good and evil spirits that vie for his allegiance, but he is also

[109] Al-Kubrā, *Die fawā'iḥ al-ǧamāl wa fawātiḥ al-ǧalāl*, pp. 15-16 # 36 of the Arabic text.
[110] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 31.

compelled to search out the subconscious motivations and long-range consequences of his seemingly positive impulses. The Path is rife with good deeds that must undergo scrutiny and evaluation, subject to the criteria of whether or not they are the best response to God's will, and in accord with one's own spiritual strengths and weaknesses.

What, objectively, may appear to be an action of high spiritual worth may result in disaster when performed by one lacking experience and understanding. Nor is there any guarantee lest even the most adept should be faced with ambiguous situations in which they feel paralyzed to choose among the positive options confronting them. One must, however, make a choice, in spite of the risk, and accept the consequences. It is this awareness of being constantly on the brink of spiritual disaster that is characteristic of the life of spiritual discipline.

Al-Makkī illustrates this point with the story of a great ascetic to whom some people came complaining of another group of people who worship a tree instead of God. The ascetic is filled with holy rage, seizes an ax, and sets off to chop the tree down. A venerable old man, Iblīs in disguise, stops him on the way, invokes God's blessing upon him, and asks what he is doing. The ascetic explains, but the old *shaykh* retorts, "What business is that of yours? You have abandoned your worship and your self-improvement, and devoted yourself to something totally different."

The ascetic insists that cutting down the tree is very much a part of his worship, but the old man refuses to listen and they begin to fight. The ascetic easily overpowers the disguised Iblīs and sits on his chest. "Let me go so I can talk to you!" cries the old man. The ascetic backs off and old man Iblīs rises and explains to the ascetic that God does not oblige him to cut this tree down because he is not a prophet. His work is to perform worship, which, in fact, he has stopped because of this foolish tree. If God wants to prevent these people from worshipping this tree, he will send prophets to them. The ascetic refuses to capitulate and they fight again. Iblīs is overpowered a second time; he begs to be released by offering to describe to the ascetic a good deed that will be of enormous benefit to him.

> 'You are an ascetic and you possess nothing; you must depend on the people to support you. Perhaps you would like to confer benefit on your brothers and give mutual assistance to your neighbors, to expand your own circumstances that you might have no need of the people.'

This seemed a fine idea to the ascetic. Consequently the old man promised to leave, every night, two dinars by the ascetic's head with which he could pay his own expenses, those of his family, and even have money left for charity. Iblīs' offer semed to the ascetic to be far more advantageous for the Muslim Community than cutting down a tree.

> 'I am no prophet,' he said. 'God has not ordered me to cut it down; there is no sin in leaving it. This, however, was something I felt disposed to do. But what harm would there be to those devoted to God's unity if it stays? And this proposal he has mentioned is far more useful to people in general.'

They swear agreement and go their own ways. The ascetic returns to his worship, and for two nights all goes as planned, but on the third night no money appears. Furious, the ascetic resolves to cut the tree down, but on his way he meets another old man (Iblīs again!) who questions him about his quest. When the old *shaykh* hears that the ascetic wishes to cut down the tree, he taunts him: "You lie! By God, you have not the power to do it." The ascetic jumps on him in a rage, and tries to throw him down as he had done twice before; but, to his chagrin, the old man overpowers him with ease. He was like a bird in the old *shaykh*'s hands.

> 'How can this be?' the ascetic cried. 'The first time,' Iblīs replied, 'you became angry for God's sake, and your goal was the hereafter; God made me subject to you and you conquered me. But this time you came, angry for your own interest, and your goal was the world. Therefore God gave me power over you and I have laid you low.'[111]

Iblīs' effort to draw people away from the higher good to the lower does not limit itself to suggestion and persuasion. When the situation necessitates, Iblīs himself will actually interfere in the course of human events by performing some good deed, in order to prevent the believer's achievement of higher states associated with the greater good. A fable, familiar to both Sufis and storytellers, recounts the history of a holy man who, every day, cursed Iblīs a thousand times. On one particular day, while he was sleeping at the base of a wall, someone hurriedly woke him up: "Get up! The wall is about to fall!" The man escaped in the nick of time. Overcome with gratitude, he sought to learn the name of his benefactor:

> 'Who are you who possess such compassion?' He said, 'I am Iblīs.' The holy man said, 'Praise God! I curse you a thousand times a day and you show me good will?' He replied, 'I was afraid that the wall would fall on you, and by that means you attain the rank of the martyrs. That would have infuriated me and distressed me much more!'[112]

Another brilliant example in Sufi literature of Iblīs' actually performing a good deed in order to prevent an individual's enjoyment of even greater rewards occurs in the second book of Rūmī's *Mathnawī*, during an encounter of Iblīs with the caliph Muʿāwiya.[113] Rūmī accepts the premise

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[111] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:333-334.

[112] Al-Makkī, *ʿIlm al-qulūb*, p. 169. The same story is recounted by Ath-Thaʿlabī. See Ath-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-majālis*, p. 37.

[113] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 2, l. 2604-2792, pp. 322-332.

that Iblīs, on occasion, acts righteously, and he develops the idea one step further. If it is admitted that Iblīs performs good deeds, it may also be possible, Rūmī implies, that these spring from an actual well of goodness within Iblīs himself. It is this logic that Rūmī exploits in molding the character of Iblīs into that of a moving, tragic figure.

The story is lengthy, almost two hundred lines, and begins with Muʿāwiya suddenly being awakened from a sound sleep by a stranger who has surreptitiously gained access to the palace sleeping quarters.

He shouted, 'Hey, who are you? What is your name?'
He replied, 'Truthfully, my name is Iblīs the Wretched.'
He said, 'Why did you wake me up with such earnestness?
Speak truthfully to me; tell me not what is contrary and opposite!'
He answered, 'The time of prayer has almost come to an end;
you must run quickly to the mosque.'[114]

Muʿāwiya accepts none of this and reviles Iblīs for his evil ways. What follows is one of the most moving passages in the *Mathnawī*, Iblīs' *apologia pro vita sua*, a reaffirmation of his overwhelming love for the one God whom he served with singleminded dedication from the beginning of time.

He said, 'From the first I was an angel,
and I traversed the path of obedience with my whole soul.
I was an intimate of the followers of the Path,
and to those who dwell by the Throne, I was well-loved friend.
Is it possible that my first calling leave my heart?
How should my first love be foreign to my heart?
If in your travels you see Rūm and Khutan,
How should love of your homeland leave your heart?
I, too, have been one of those drunk from this wine!
I have been one of the lovers at His court.
My umbilicus they cut on His love;
His love they sowed in my heart.
From Fate I have seen glorious days;
In springtime I have drunk the water of mercy.
Was it not I His gracious hand sowed?
Was it not I He raised from nothingness?
O many the time I have seen His kindness,
and walked about the rosegarden of His contentment.
Upon my head He would place His merciful hand;
Wellsprings of grace He would open from me.
When I was a baby, who sought milk for me?
Who rocked my cradle? He.
From whom did I drink milk other than His milk?
Who nourished me except His providence?'[115]

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[114] *Ibid.*, l. 2610-2612, p. 323.
[115] *Ibid.*, l. 2617-2628, pp. 323-324.

This ever present awareness of the Beloved in his heart, Iblīs claims, is the source of his desire to help Muʿāwiya. Muʿāwiya's rejoinder is to read aloud the list of Iblīs' cunning deceptions, a litany of spiritual disasters played out in human history from the dawn of mankind. Iblīs' reply recalls the conflicting theories of the Qurʾānic commentators about the true nature of this satanic creature.[116]

Iblīs describes himself as an *instrumentum Deo conjunctum*, an instrument of God who must obey his master in all things. He purports not to have the power to choose freely for himself apart from God; he does nothing, he insists, but provide a test for man, a test required by God. If man falls, it is his own fault; human evil springs from mankind, not from Iblīs whom men and women unjustly treat as scapegoat for their self-inflicted ills.

'To the righteous I act as guide;
the withered branch I lop off.
For what reason do I lay out this fodder?
To make clear what kind of animal this is!'
.....
'How can I make a good man bad? I am not God.
I am one who invites; I am not their Creator.
Me, make what is good, obscene? I am not Lord!
I am but the mirror of the beautiful and the ugly.'[117]

Muʿāwiya is overcome at these words and feels helpless before his antagonist. In desperation he begs God for help against the guiles and imposture of Iblīs, while at the same time he confronts Iblīs again with a demand for the truth.

'O Iblīs! Devourer of Creatures, and Tempter,
why did you awaken me? Tell the truth!'
.....
(Iblīs replies:)
'Why do you complain to God about me, O silly fellow?
Better to complain about the evil of that vile lower soul of yours.
You eat *ḥalwa*, and so you get boils;
fever strikes, and your whole temperament is topsy-turvy.
Since you do not realize that deception springs from your own being,
you curse Iblīs, who is without sin.
O errant man, it is not the fault of Iblīs, it is your own,
that you are scurrying like a fox after the sheep's fatty tail.'[118]

Iblīs paints himself as the tragic victim, who obediently allows himself to be cursed and reviled because it is the will of God for him. Iblīs is but

[116] See Ch. 1, pp. 25-29.
[117] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 2, l. 2675-2676, p. 326; l. 2686-2687, p. 326.
[118] *Ibid.*, l. 2713, p. 328; l. 2718-2721, p. 328.

God's tool; man's free choice is what wins him paradisiacal happiness or the torture of the fire.

Muʿāwiya, newly strengthened by God's grace, is impervious to these tragic-sounding soliloquies. He adamantly demands to be told the true intention of Iblīs in awakening him for prayer. No more false laments, just the truth, he insists.

> Then ʿAzāzīl said to him, 'O wise lord,
> I must lay out before you my ruse.
> If you had let the time of prayer slip by,
> because of your heartrending grief, you would have sighed and made lament.
> That grief and that lament and that longing
> would have surpassed two hundred *dhikrs* and ritual prayers.
> Therefore I awakened you,
> fearful lest such sighings burn away the veil,
> that such sighings might not be yours,
> that you might not discover a way to it.
> I am the envious one; from envy I acted thus.
> I am the enemy; my work is deception and malice.'[119]

Muʿāwiya rejoices in having unmasked the crafty Iblīs and his clever deception:

> 'You were urging me to good
> in order that you might drive me away from the better good.'[120]

What is significant to note, however, is that the overall impact of this section of the *Mathnawī* does not necessarily result in increased animosity on the reader's part towards Iblīs. Quite the contrary is true. Iblīs is the far more nuanced and sympathetic of the two characters; Muʿāwiya is static, one-dimensional, a type of bland "everyman". In fact, the name of the character need not be Muʿāwiya since he possesses little depth or development, historical or otherwise; he could be any good man.

It is not rash to conclude, therefore, that while Rūmī does, in fact, consider Iblīs to be a force for evil and destruction, he, at the same time, recognizes the profound tragedy that is at the core of Iblīs' personality, a tragedy that enhances his stature by bringing to the fore the internal conflict between Iblīs' passionate love for his divine Lord and his cold, sadistic attitude towards men. This paradox cannot be ignored; to do so would reduce the character of Iblīs to a cliché.

The fact that Iblīs suggests good deeds, actually performs good deeds, and attributes these to his own essential goodness, has far-reaching consequences, even beyond what has already been described. For once one

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[119] *Ibid.*, l. 2780-2785, p. 331.
[120] *Ibid.*, l. 2792, p. 332.

accepts these possibilities as realities, it is no longer disconcerting to discover didactic tales in which Iblīs plays the role of *shaykh*, counselling the Sufi initiate against the pitfalls along the spiritual Path.

What has changed radically in these particular stories is the ultimate goal. No longer is the aim to engage the individual with a lesser good so as to prevent his profiting from the graces of the greater good, but rather it is simply to warn the traveller of the Path about the roadblocks that await him at every turn. While from the literary perspective this may not seem to be an enormous shift in emphasis, the theological one is very significant. Iblīs is no longer manipulating the good to his own end, but he is laying out for public view his own most secret and potent stratagems in order to facilitate the advancement of the Sufi practitioner. It is even possible in some of these stories to substitute the name of Muḥammad, or some other Sufi master, for that of Iblīs, without doing damage to the didactic quality or literary structure of the story. This is true, for example, in the story of Jesus and the rock to which reference will be made presently.

A collection of these tales appears in Al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'*, while other scattered examples are found in Al-Makkī, Al-Kubrā, and Ibn Khafīf. Many of them deal with some one particular vice against which Iblīs counsels because of its ability to corrupt one's spiritual life; a favorite is anger. Iblīs once appeared to Ibn Ḥanẓala and said:

> 'O Ibn Ḥanẓala, take heed of what I am about to teach you.' He replied, 'I have no need of it!' He answered, 'Pay attention. If it is good advice, you can take it; if bad, reject it. O Ibn Ḥanẓala, do you ask no one other than God questions about desire? Pay attention: what happens to you when you get angry? Truly I take control over you when you get angry.'[121]

Similarly Iblīs is questioned by a group of saints concerning his methods of conquering man. Anger and passion, he asserts, are the chief weapons.[122] In confirmation of this, the story is told about a certain monk to whom Iblīs appeared and who inquired of Iblīs what characteristics of mankind were most helpful to him. Again the tempter replies that violent rage renders man most vulnerable by allowing Iblīs to toy with him the way a child plays with a ball.[123]

A more complex tale, strains of which were later picked up by Ad-Diyārbakrī,[124] concerns the encounter between Iblīs and Moses. Iblīs begs him for help because Moses is especially close to God, having been chosen by Him as prophet and actually having seen Him. "I want to

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[121] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 33.
[122] *Ibid.*, p. 32.
[123] *Ibid.*
[124] See Ch. 1, pp. 38-39.

repent," admits Iblīs. "Intercede on my behalf with the Lord that He forgive me." Moses agrees and ascends the mountain where he pleads Iblīs' cause before God Almighty. Moses' petition is granted, on condition that Iblīs bow in repentance before Adam's grave. Moses relates God's decree to the haughty Iblīs who flies into a rage:

> I did not bow to him while he was alive; will I bow to him now that he is dead? O Moses, I am indebted to you for having interceded on my behalf. Remember me on three occasions and I will not destroy you during them. Remember me when you become angry, for truly my spirit is in your heart, my essence in your essence, and I flow in your very bloodstream. Remember me when you have been angry, for when someone gets angry I breathe into his nose and he knows not what to do; and remember me when you are on the march, for I come to a man when he is on the march and I remind him of his wife, and children, and family, so that he is overcome....[125]

Greed and envy are the subjects of Iblīs' counsel to Noah whom he meets on the ark. Iblīs does not hide from Noah his desire to take over the hearts of men; that is the reason, he tells him, why he has joined him on the ark. He does, however, agree to answer Noah's questions about the means he uses to destroy mankind. Iblīs offers to discuss three of his five favorite passions, but God reveals to Noah that he has no need of hearing three of them; only the other two are important, for they are those that never fail. Iblīs relents and begins to describe the two he cherishes most:

> They are greed and envy. Through envy I was cursed and made a stoned Satan. As for greed, well, Adam was permitted all of Paradise, except the tree, and I obtained from him my wish through greed.[126]

Iblīs' distress at being enticed into playing the role of a *shaykh* is vividly described in a story in which Iblīs appeared to John the Baptist with what appeared to be brightly colored human viscera draped over his satanic form. John asks what they could possibly be:

> 'They are the passions of men,' he said. 'Is any one among them mine?' Iblīs replied, 'Perhaps you ate your fill and we made you sluggish and turned you from prayer and *dhikr*.' He (John) said, 'I swear by God, the Blessed One, the Most High, that I never fill my stomach with food.' And Iblīs cried, 'And I swear by God that I will never give sincere advice to a Muslim again!'[127]

Iblīs, it seems, was not able to keep his promise, for he also gives advice on how to make progress in the ascetical life to John's successor,

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[125] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 32.

[126] *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33. The quotation appears on p. 33.

[127] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:347; the same story appears in Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 33.

Jesus. This is perhaps the most striking example of this genre of tale; Iblīs actually points out to Jesus an attachment of which he is unaware, and which might possibly keep Jesus from liberating himself from the world. Iblīs' motivation is by no means pure; there is clearly a cynical and mocking tone to his words. Nevertheless, as a practical consequence of this conversation, Jesus becomes aware that he is not yet fully detached from the world.

> The story is told of Jesus—may peace be upon him!—that he placed a stone beneath his head. It was as though when he elevated his head off the ground, by that means he was able to rest. Iblīs raised objections to him and said, 'O son of Mary, do you not claim that you have renounced the world?' He replied, 'Yes.' He asked, 'That thing you have put under your head, where does that come from?' Jesus—may peace be upon him!—threw the stone away and said, 'Take that! together with what I have abandoned, and anything else like it.'[128]

B. *The Prideful Iblīs*

1. *Iblīs: the sin of "I"*

The description of the Sufi assimilation and amplification of the Iblīs motif has thus far ignored one of the most significant roles Iblīs plays in the Sufi writings, a role that harks back to the Qurʾānic confrontation between Iblīs and Adam. Because of his overweening pride, Iblīs is blind to the true nature of the newly created Adam; consequently, he acquires the title the One-Eyed. The Sufi preoccupation with this theme and its ramifications for an understanding of free will and predestination will be the subject of inquiry in this segment.

> See in everyone's face a wondrous moon.
> When you have seen the beginning, see the end
> so that you do not become like Iblīs, one-eyed.
> Half he sees, half not, like some defective.
> He saw Adam's clay, but his faith he saw not;
> he saw this world in him, but his other-worldly eye he saw not.[129]

Iblīs' one-eyed blindness is a favorite theme of Rūmī; it is the most frequent vehicle in the *Dīwān* and *Mathnawī* for allusions to Iblīs. There are a variety of images that Rūmī employs to describe Adam's *ẓāhir*, the exterior which Iblīs perceives, in contrast to his *bāṭin*, the interior hidden from his sight.

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[128] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:538. Two other different versions of the same story can be found in: Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 34, and Al-Kubrā, *Die fawāʾiḥ al-ǧamāl wa fawātiḥ al-ǧalāl*, p. 15 # 35 of the Arabic text.

[129] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 4, l. 1615-1617, p. 706. See also Book 4, l. 1709-1710 for a similar passage.

In an Adam who possessed neither like nor equal,
the eye of Iblīs saw nothing but a clay figure.[130]

O ignorant fellow, do not look upon the emperor of the true faith as clay!
For this is the view Iblīs, the accursed one, took.[131]

Since Adam's treasure was buried in a ruin,
his clay became a blindfold for the accursed one.
He kept looking at the clay with scornful contempt;
Adam's spirit kept saying, 'My clay is a barrier to you!'[132]

Bowing to Adam is manifest proof of his superiority;
the husk continually bows to the kernel.[133]

These are but a few of the metaphors Rūmī weaves into the fabric of his work. Elsewhere Iblīs is described as a cow unable to discover the pearl hidden beneath the loam,[134] or as one who is eternally short-sighted, able to see only a painted image of water and clay,[135] and not the hundred rosegardens that lay behind,[136] where that idol, whose cheek is beautiful as the moon, makes his home.[137] What is it that these metaphors describe?—man's hidden spirit,[138] that which links him to his God in an intimacy never before permitted to creatures.[139]

Gaze upon that life-breath; do not see Adam,
that we might ravish your soul with grace.
Iblīs possessed a gaze that separates;
he imagined that we are separated from God.[140]

To be blind to Adam's hidden treasure is, at the same time, to reject the basis of the mystical relationship which is founded on the free, creative gift of God's own spirit. This unique link sets mankind apart from all other creatures in the cosmos and raises him above them.

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[130] *Ibid.*, Book 3, l. 2759, p. 519.

[131] *Ibid.*, Book 4, l. 824, p. 667.

[132] *Ibid.*, Book 5, l. 3452-3453, p. 999. The blindfold image is also used in Book 3, l. 2298-2300, p. 496, while the image of hidden treasure appears in Book 6, l. 1137-1139, p. 1099 and Book 6, l. 3581-3582, p. 1217.

[133] *Ibid.*, Book 6, l. 2077, p. 1144.

[134] *Ibid.*, Book 6, l. 2930-2934, p. 1185.

[135] Rūmī, *Kullīyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, p. 615 #1623.

[136] *Ibid.*, pp. 655-656 #1737.

[137] *Ibid.*, p. 1269 #3405.

[138] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 3, l. 4247-4248, p. 593.

[139] A fable of possible gnostic origin recounted by ʿAṭṭār takes a completely different view. Iblīs is condemned, not for failing to see man's inner secret (*sirr*), but for exactly the opposite. By standing erect while all the others bowed, he was the only one to witness this revelation of man's inner mystery. For this, God condemned him. See ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, pp. 452-454.

[140] Rūmī, *Kullīyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, p. 599 #1576. See also *Mathnawī*, Book 6, l. 3186-3190, p. 1198.

When Iblīs saw Adam's veil, he rejected it;
Adam cried out to him, 'You are the rejected one! I am not rejected.'
The rest of the angels bowed down,
and as they bowed they shouted, 'We raise our testimony,
there is an idol beneath the veil whose qualities
steal away our reason, and we have bowed down.'[141]

Iblīs' blindness is far more than a disability of the senses; it is a sickness unto death. Because of it, the ascetic of a thousand years, the *princeps* of believers, finds himself cast on the dung heap like offal.[142] The frenzied taunts of Iblīs and his cohorts, "You are made of clay!" fade away in diminishing echoes, ignored, while the hosts of angels perform their ceaseless bowing before Adam, God's chosen.[143] Al-Muḥāsibī cynically describes the new found state of Iblīs as one of *baqā'*, perdurance, usually associated with that of mystic states; his *baqā'*, however, is in *balā'*, tribulation and affliction, not mystic peace.[144]

In their assimilation into Sufi lore of the cosmic confrontation between Iblīs and Adam, the mystics focus on one particular facet of the mythic event, Iblīs' cry: "*Ana khayrun minhu!*" ("I am better than he!").[145] This sentence, especially the first word "I" (*ana*), is the classic Sufi symbol for pride in its most extreme form. The sin of pride, as exemplified in the mythic history of Iblīs, is, for the Sufis, a stance totally contrary to that of the followers of the mystic Path. Whereas mysticism culminates in the intoxication of union with God, arrogant pride leads to the intoxication of the intellect, with its resultant drunken assertions of independent self-existence and self-worth.[146] The source of this craving for blind self-assertion is the Iblīs-*nafs*: "The name of your enemy Iblīs begins with an *alif*," explains An-Niffarī, "and the name of your enemy the *nafs* begins with a *nūn*."[147] *Alif* and *nūn* together form the letters of the word *ana*, "I".

There is no worse corruption within your soul
than the conceit of perfection, O coquette.
Much blood must run from your heart and eye
for this self-wonder to flow out of you.

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[141] Rūmī, *Kullīyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, p. 643 #1705.
[142] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 1, l. 3296-3297, p. 163.
[143] Rūmī, *Kullīyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, pp. 1133-1134 #3063.
[144] Al-Muḥāsibī, *Al-Masā'il fī a'māl al-qulūb*, p. 57.
[145] See Qur'ān 7:12 and 38:76.
Examples abound in Sufi literature, ranging from Al-Muḥāsibī's sombre commentary (*Kitāb ar-ri'āya*, p. 239) to Rūmī's vivid poetic interpretations (*Mathnawī*, Book 1, l. 3960-3966, p. 195; Book 5, l. 1918-1973, pp. 919-921).
[146] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 4, l. 3612-3615, pp. 804-805. See also Book 4, l. 3339-3347, p. 791.
[147] An-Niffarī, *Trois œuvres inédites de mystiques musulmans*, ed. Paul Nwyia, pp. 207-208 #31.

The calamity of Iblīs was his 'I am the better one!'
And this same disease afflicts the *nafs* of every living creature.[148]

Far more revealing than the association of the word "I" with pride is the fact that Sufis see hidden beneath it a possible claim to self-divinization. "I" is not, therefore, a word that can be uttered by the novice or even, for that matter, by the experienced. It is permitted only to a chosen few to venture into the realm of "I" and not encounter there spiritual destruction.

He who is without affliction is a highway robber,
for he who is without affliction cries, 'I am the Divine Truth!'
The untimely utterance of that 'I' is a curse;
its articulation at the proper time is a mercy.
The 'I' of Manṣūr was surely a mercy;
the 'I' of Pharaoh a curse. Take note![149]

For most Sufis, the proclamation of "I" is a satanic impulse, derived from and modeled after Iblīs' own assertion. Only God has the right to say "I", for He is the only truly self-subsistent being. Consequently the saints must be on their guard, watching one another, lest any of their number should succumb to this temptation during false ecstasy. "For anyone who says 'I'," Al-Kharrāz teaches, "is veiled from gnosis, and anyone who says to his Lord, 'You,' in a spirit of needful dependence, his heart will be opened to gnosis."[150]

Tradition has it that Iblīs was so stunned at seeing the obedience of a thousand years turn to dust because of a single word, that he wandered aimlessly through the bazaars, crying aloud, "Be careful! lest you be boastful. And never say 'I'! Take a good look at what happened to me because of pride."[151] Pride of essence and nobility are God's characteristics; whoever contends with Him, and claims equality with Him, must accept the consequences.

The "I" of Iblīs becomes a hanging tree from which he is suspended for eternity, and those who imitate his words become the fruit of that same tree.[152] The Sufi writers make the fate of Iblīs the prime analogue for what awaits those who would blindly place their faith in externals

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[148] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 1, l. 3214-3216, p. 159.

[149] *Ibid.*, Book 2, l. 2521-2523, p. 318. The "I" of Ḥusayn Ibn Manṣūr Al-Ḥallāj will be discussed in Ch. 3. For the "I" of Pharaoh, see Qurʾān 28:38.

[150] See Abū Saʿīd Al-Kharrāz, *Rasāʾil Al-Kharrāz*, ed. Qāsim As-Samarrāʾī (Baghdād: Maṭbaʿat al-majmaʿ al-ʿilmī al-ʿirāqī, 1387 A.H.-1967 C.E.), pp. 34-35, 45. The quotation is found on page 45.

[151] Muḥammad Ibn Munawwar Ibn Abī Saʿd Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ibn Abī Saʿīd Al-Mayhanī, *Asrār at-tawḥīd fī maqāmāt ash-shaykh Abū Saʿīd*, ed. Dhabīḥ Allāh Safā (Tehrān: Amīr Kabīr, 1332 A.H. solar), p. 310.

[152] Al-Mayhanī, *Asrār at-tawḥīd*, pp. 317-318.

(*ẓāhir*), be they external religious accomplishments or wordly trappings. No one, and nothing, can assure the initiate of spiritual success but God Himself.

The life of Iblīs, therefore, is witness to the futility of worship without concomitant interior growth in holiness through dependence on divine grace.[153] Pride of worship is not the only cause of blindness; in the same breath the spiritual writers often mention the fate of Balʿām, son of Baʿūr, a legendary figure of extraordinary intelligence, who, in spite of his power of intellect, suffered ruin at the hands of Moses.[154]

> The creatures of the world hungered for Balʿām,
> son of Baʿūr, as if he were the Jesus of the age.
> They bowed to no other but him;
> his spells gave health to the sick.
> Because of his pride and perfection, he grappled with Moses;
> the outcome was as you have heard.
> In this same way, there have been in the world a hundred thousand Iblīses and Balʿāms,
> both visible and hidden.
> God made them both famous,
> that these two might bear witness against the rest.[155]

A third member is added to the group in the person of Adam, whose blindness arose from false security; he gloried in the safety of Paradise, oblivious to the possibility that his interior spirit might be wounded, despite his surroundings.

> Ḥātim Al-Aṣamm said, 'Do not be dazzled by a safe place. Is there a place more secure than Paradise? And there Adam—may peace be upon him!—endured what he endured. And do not be dazzled by abundant worship, for Iblīs, after the length of his devotion, endured what he endured. And do not be dazzled by abundant knowledge, for Balʿām was conversant with God's most glorious name. See what he endured!...[156]

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[153] See Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, p. 255.

[154] Balʿām is often identified with the unnamed figure in Qurʾān 7:175. He is said to have received God's revelation, but he ultimately rejected it. His encounter with Moses is said to have occurred at the siege of Al-Balqā, identified with Jericho, where Balʿām cursed Moses and the people of Israel in order to prevent their entering the city. Balʿām succeeded in his efforts, but in return he himself was cursed.

[155] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 1, l. 3298-3302, p. 163. See also Book 3, l. 747, p. 419; Book 3, l. 4789, p. 620.

[156] Al-Qushayrī, *Ar-Risālat al-qushayrīya*, 1:314. See also Al-Makkī, *ʿIlm al-qulūb*, p. 103; ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, pp. 300-301. (This again refers to Ḥātim Al-Aṣamm, although the story is greatly developed in this passage.) Anṣārī also calls attention to the foolishness of developing a false sense of security from one's external environment, using, however, a different personality as example: "Iblīs became a *zindīq* (heretic) in the heavens and Abū Bakr became righteous in a house of idols" (ʿAbd Allāh Anṣārī, *Majmūʿa-yi rasāʾil-i Khawāja ʿAbd Allāh Anṣārī*, ed. Muḥammad Shīrvānī [Tehrān: Intishārāt-i bunyād-i farhang-i Irān, 1352 A.H. solar], p. 139).

Not only is Iblīs singled out in this context for his reliance on the preeminence derived from his aeons of service at the Divine Throne, but he too, like Balᶜām, is condemned for his blind faith in intellect. As was mentioned in Chapter 1, Iblīs, through his use of analogical reasoning (*qiyās*), arrives at the conclusion that he is superior to Adam because fire, the essential element from which he has been created, is superior to Adam's clay.[157] It is this specific intellectual process that initiates the downfall of Iblīs.

> The first person who ever exhibited these insignificant analogies
> in the presence of God's light was Iblīs.[158]

The intellectual self-reliance of Iblīs, manifested in his complete confidence in *qiyās*, is most often understood to be a direct offshoot of his pride. There is a nuance, however, that Rūmī adds by inserting a middle step between pride and intellectual blindness. He alludes to narcissism, a by-product of pride, explaining that pride directs all one's love towards oneself, thus negating the possibility for an outreach in love towards God. Intellectual blindness is, therefore, the logical consequence of Iblīs' inability to yearn for, or recognize, what is beyond himself, especially God's love at work in the creation of Adam. He perceives only empty shells, devoid of spiritual life or love.

> He possessed intellect, but since he possessed not the passionate yearning of faith,
> he saw in Adam only a clay form.
> Even if you possess the fine points of knowledge, O worthy fellow,
> that will not open your two eyes to pierce the unseen.[159]

The fear that the intellect might be accepted as solely determinative in spiritual matters runs deep in the Islamic mystical tradition. The early rationalists, Al-Hujwīrī tells us, tried to equate spiritual progress with progress in the development of reason, resulting in the ludicrous conclusion that every highly rational being must somehow be an *ᶜārif*, gnostic, regardless of his or her interest in religious faith experience or acceptance of it.

Once this argument failed to hold, the rationalists proposed the theory that there are demonstrable and indisputable proofs for the existence of God. And they asserted that, through the knowledge acquired by means of these proofs, man achieves contemplation of God. Al-Hujwīrī turns to Iblīs' mythic life for a clear refutation of this claim:

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[157] See Ch. 1, pp. 34-36.
[158] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 1, l. 3396, p. 168; see also Book 3, l. 2792, p. 520.
[159] *Ibid.*, Book 6, l. 260-261, p. 1055.

> For Iblīs saw many miraculous signs: Paradise, Hell, the Divine Throne; but the vision of these glories was not the cause of his achieving gnosis.... The people of the *sunna* believe that sound reasoning and the examining of evidence are a means to gnosis, but not its cause. The only cause of gnosis is the grace and favor of God's will.... For without the grace of God, the intellect is blind.[160]

The "I" of Iblīs—with its claims to divinity and intellectual self-sufficiency, its narcissism and spiritual blindness—ranks among the most heinous cosmic acts performed in the mythic history of the universe. It is the more frightening to the Sufis because they admit the distinct possibility of its being reenacted time and time again in their own lives.

Rūmī sees sins of the flesh as pale shadows when compared to the ambitions and divine pretensions engendered by Iblīs-like pride.[161] It is, therefore, not surprising to find Al-Makkī discouraging Sufis from begging God for the gift of impeccability, because from such a gift does arrogant self-assertion spring with ease. Moreover, if there were no sinners, Al-Makkī adds, upon whom would God shower His mercy? It is better to recognize one's sinful, human passions and seek God's forgiveness and assistance, as did Adam, rather than to delude oneself with fantasies of divinity like Iblīs.[162]

In a final touch of irony, Al-Makkī and Rūmī juxtapose Iblīs' unrepentant state with his craving for a respite, which God finally grants him until the Day of Judgement. Endless life in this world, Al-Makkī observes, is God's greatest curse, reserved for His most detestable creature.[163] And Rūmī concludes:

> Life without repentance is a soul-stripping agony;
> to be absent from God is immediate death.
> With God, both life and death are pleasing;
> without God, the water of life is fire.[164]

2. *Iblīs: the plea of coercion*

When the case that has thus far been argued against Iblīs is examined, there seems little room for ambiguity; his intent and actions seem quite clear:

> Do you not consider Iblīs? When he had learned Almighty God's command and had testified to His divinity, he then stubbornly resisted His command after knowledge, proof, and testimony. And so Almighty God cursed him

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[160] Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, pp. 342-343. The quotation is found on p. 343.
[161] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 5, l. 518-526, p. 846.
[162] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:447.
[163] *Ibid.*, 1:536.
[164] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 5, l. 770-771, pp. 858-859.

until the Day of Reckoning. He became the evil one among created beings. All hope of repentance for him was cut, forever.[165]

These words of Al-Muḥāsibī sum up well the prosecution's case. It would, however, be unfair were one not to consider Iblīs' own defense of himself: "Because You (God) have led me astray, I will definitely waylay them along Your Straight Path" (Qurʾān 7:16).[166] In the Qurʾān itself Iblīs protests that he is but an instrument of God, used by Him to test mankind; he is but a powerless tool, subservient to a God whose will controls all that comes into being. It is God who is the source of movement, change, permanence, etc. No creature has the power to resist temptation, or the strength to obey, for all depends on the help of God. God orders His creatures to do whatever He wills, in the same way that He created them when He willed.[167] He whom God favors is saved; he whom God rejects is lost.

O Adam, you who are of clay, rise above the star *Suhā*;
O Iblīs, you who are of fire, go down to the earth![168]

Al-Ghazālī recounts a fable telling of God's creating two servants, one handsome and beloved with the name Gabriel, the other ugly and detestable with the name Iblīs. He assigns Gabriel the transmission of the revelation, while to Iblīs He leaves the seduction of mankind. It is as if a king were in need of someone to cup him and clean the refuse from the palace. Surely he would use his ugliest servant for this, while he would reserve the honor of being cupbearer for his most beloved one. The moral of the fable, Al-Ghazālī explains, is: "It is not proper for you to say, 'This is my act....' " We are mistaken if we attribute acts to ourselves. It is God who actually attributes the acts to individuals, be the action good or evil.

Of course, Al-Ghazālī admits, we humans, since we are in touch only with the visible world, attribute our actions, decisions, and various other powers to ourselves. It recalls the time when we were children and went to shadow-puppet shows; we believed that the puppets moved on their own because we were unaware both of the strings and the puppeteer. We are still children when faced with trying to comprehend the power of God as manifested in His will (*irāda*) and His command (*amr*).[169]

The tension between God's omnipotence and man's freedom was experienced on all levels of Islamic life, not simply among the Sufis. In the

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[165] Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb ar-riʿāya*, p. 256.

[166] See also Qurʾān 15:39 for a similar statement of Iblīs.

[167] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:261-262.

[168] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 2, l. 1624, p. 276.

[169] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 4, book 32, pp. 97-98. The quotation is found on page 97.

same way that human reason, especially as it manifested itself in *raʾy*, personal opinion, and *qiyās*, analogy, was judged to be an avenue of religious certitude vastly inferior to God's revealed Word, so, too, in the realm of human action, man's ability to act as a free agent appeared negligible when placed up against the determinative power of God's omnipotence. For God "leads astray whomever He wills and He guides whomever He wills" (Qurʾān 16:93).

Not that this perspective on free will and predestination was arrived at without controversy—far from it. In the formative centuries of Islam a significant group of Muslims, among them the Muʿtazilites, insisted vehemently on man's absolute moral responsibility and accountability for his actions. They became known as Qadarites, proponents of radical freedom of the will.

The Muʿtazilite belief in human responsibility was but a corollary to their defense of God's justice, for justice requires that men and women be punished or rewarded for deeds performed as a result of free moral choice. At the same time as they highlighted God's justice, the Muʿtazilites also affirmed that God is not Himself involved in the evil He condemns; rather evil is seen as the unfortunate product of man's power to choose. In the minds of the Qadarites, to opt for God's absolute omnipotence would entail attributing responsibility for all actions—good or evil—to God Himself.[170]

An insistence on man's ability to determine his moral life through free choice presents, nevertheless, traps of its own, especially if it creates the impression that man, solely through his own power, effects his salvation. This smacks of *shirk*, making oneself an associate with God in determining events, even if the event in this case is one's own destiny. As W. Montgomery Watt indicates, by the middle of the ninth century C.E. the pendulum had swung in the direction of emphasizing God's omnipotence over man's freedom. In fact, it seems that by as early as 750 C.E. the influence of Qadarism was restricted to Baṣra and its environs.[171]

The question, of course, did not resolve itself by choosing one or the other extreme position—radical freedom or predestination. Watt describes two degrees of the predestinarian doctrine: the first asserting that God determines what happens to man but not man's reactions to circumstances; the second placing both what happens and man's reactions under the determinative sway of Divine Omnipotence. By the ninth century C.E. the first degree had been generally accepted while the second

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[170] See William Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1973), pp. 238-242.

[171] *Ibid.*, pp. 104-112.

remained an object of debate, as the religious thinkers struggled to preserve some modicum of freedom for man.[172]

The classic formulation solidifying the position of the more predestinarian view is exemplified in the work of Al-Ashᶜarī (†935 C.E.) and his school. He himself was a staunch defender of God's absolute omnipotence and limitless freedom.[173] *Qadar* he rejected, teaching that all human actions are creations of God alone. Not even causality is permitted to hold sway lest somehow God's pervasive power be lessened by the assertion that creation possesses an on-going order of its own.

In defending God's omnipotence, Al-Ashᶜarī needed somehow to address the question of God's involvement in man's sinful deeds. He does so by denying any intrinsic good or evil to actions. Something is good because God commands it, evil because He forbids it. Lying, for example, is evil only because God decided it will be so. If He someday declared that lying were good and ordered His faithful to lie, men and women would be expected to comply.[174]

The faithful learn what is good and evil by careful attention to God's command, not by using reason to evaluate the intrinsic moral worth of a particular action. These paradoxical realities played heavily on the minds of the Sufis. The Iblīs myth became an important vehicle for their exploration of the ramifications the reality of God's omnipotence had for the spiritual life.

The acceptance of God's complete sway over the actions of man demands also to accept the fact that God's actions are not subject to the laws of human understanding, unless He will it to be so; logic, consistency, clarity—all may be ignored by Him. It is this experience of God's involvement in the unexpected, the illogical, the baffling, that heightened the Sufi awareness of what has become known in the Islamic tradition as God's *makr*, His wiliness.

> When Iblīs was overwhelmed the way he was, Gabriel and Michael—may peace be upon them!—shed tears of grief for a long time. God Most High asked them, 'What is wrong with you that you shed all these tears?' They cried out in unison, 'O Lord, we are not safe from Your wiliness!'[175]

It is up to God to decide whether an action will be a guide that points the way to Him, or whether the same action will be an obstacle that bars the way to Him. The case of Jesus is a good example; for some he was a

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[172] *Ibid.*, pp. 115-116.

[173] See R. J. McCarthy, S.J., *The Theology of Al-Ashᶜarī* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1953), especially the Arabic text of the *Kitāb al-lumaᶜ*, pp. 24-31, #49-62.

[174] *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72, #169-172 of the Arabic text.

[175] Al-Qushayrī, *Ar-Risālat al-qushayrīya*, 1:314.

guide to *maʿrifa*, gnosis, for others he was a veil.[176] All that comes into being, all that attains actuality, is ultimately bound to the divine will in a causal relationship. Anṣārī capitalizes on this fact to pose some pointed questions:

> O God, although Iblīs was false teacher to Adam,
> who made the wheat to be his portion?[177]

It is God, Anṣārī remarks, who chose Adam to be one of the elect, and transformed Iblīs into a rebellious sinner. Out of reverence, like Adam, we ascribe faults to ourselves, "...but, in truth, You instigated the crime."[178]

The logical progress of this argumentation leads to a drastic mitigation of the responsibility assigned to Iblīs for his deeds, if not to his complete exoneration, in which case Iblīs ought to be considered the tragic victim rather than the crafty deceiver. At the same time, the broader question must be asked whether or not the Iblīs myth points up the frightening possibility that there may be little or no free will involved in the actions of created beings. Are men just pieces moved around a chessboard in a game whose outcome has already been carefully determined?

One of the more strident critics of such a position is Rūmī, who devotes several important passages in his *Mathnawī* to a refutation of the necessitarian's religious and philosophical stance. He confronts head-on those arguments founded on the Iblīs myth.[179]

> Learn from father Adam, O clear-browed fellow;
> aforetime 'O Lord,' he said, and 'we have sinned!'
> He neither made excuse nor did he paint any lie,
> the flag of neither trickery nor pretense did he raise.
> Contrary to this, Iblīs raised his voice in debate:
> 'I used to be red-cheeked with honor;
> You have made me jaundiced.
> The color is Yours, You are my dyer;
> You are the source of my crime, my misery, and my scar!'
> Take care! Recite the verse: 'O Lord, because You have led me astray'
> so you do not become a necessitarian, and weave cheap lies.
> For how long will you leap into the tree of compulsion,
> and lay aside your free will,
> embroiled in battle and controversy with God
> like that Iblīs and his offspring?[180]

[176] Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, p. 350.

[177] ʿAbd Allāh Anṣārī, *Munājāt*, tr. Lawrence Morris and Rustam Sarfeh (New York: Khaneghah and Maktab of Maleknia Naseralishah, 1975), p. 64 of the Persian text.

[178] Anṣārī, *Munājāt*, p. 44 of the Persian text.

[179] See especially Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 1, l. 1480-1514, pp. 73-74; Book 4, l. 1373-1435, pp. 693-696; Book 5, l. 2963-3021, pp. 974-977; Book 6, l. 401-434, pp. 1062-1064. There is also a lengthy poem in the *Dīwān* which describes dramatically the debate of Iblīs with God. See Rūmī, *Kullīyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, pp. 368-369 #914.

[180] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 4, l. 1389-1395, p. 694.

Rūmī never tires of pointing out how free many people seem to feel when it becomes a question of choosing to follow their passions. The power of choice, he admits, is not always operative; it remains latent until the stimulus arises, then it unveils itself in all its splendor. How foolish it is to reduce oneself to a stone! Do stones ever make profession of faith, or get angry, or earn praise and honor through good deeds?[181]

> And the king answered, 'On the contrary, that which springs from oneself
> is the harvest of error and the profit from labor.
> If not, how could Adam have said to God,
> "O Lord, we have sinned against ourselves!"
> He would have said, "This sin comes from Fate;
> since this is Destiny's deed, what profit is our vigilance?"
> Like Iblīs who said, "You have led me astray;
> You have shattered the cup and You are beating me."
> It is rather both Destiny and the effort of the servant that are truth.
> Take care! Be not one-eyed like that tattered Iblīs.'[182]

Rūmī points to the observable fact of man's vacillation between two options as indicating the possibility of choice; otherwise these conflicting impulses, pulling now this way and now that, would be superfluous. True, the choices open to men are not infinite; one cannot choose to fly, for example. Nevertheless it is possible to choose whether to go to Damascus or Baghdād; and, far more to the point, one can choose to do wrong or not. We cannot blame others, or Destiny, for our own wayward actions, but we must be accountable ourselves and accept the outcome.[183] To plead coercion is to imply that there is no responsibility; and to claim no responsibility is to imply that religious and moral imperatives do not exist. To robots, good and evil are empty terms, but not to humans.

> If in God's opinion, both good and evil were of equal value in the test,
> then Iblīs would possess the same countenance as the moon-faced
> Gabriel.[184]

3. *Iblīs: God's irāda and amr*

There remains, however, another critical level to the problem of the refusal of Iblīs that moves beyond both his claim to be the victim of coercion and Rūmī's reaffirmation of man's free will. For when the necessitarian argument fails, Iblīs turns to a far subtler and more persuasive defense. He insists he has not incurred any guilt at all, but, on the contrary, that he has chosen the more righteous path in conformity with

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[181] *Ibid.*, Book 5, l. 2967-2981, p. 975.
[182] *Ibid.*, Book 6, l. 403-407, p. 1062.
[183] *Ibid.*, Book 6, l. 408-416, pp. 1062-1063.
[184] Rūmī, *Kullīyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, p. 909 #2447.

the will of God; for God's will (*irāda*) is that God alone be worshipped, He and no other. By commanding Iblīs and the angels to bow to Adam, God was actually putting them all to the test. Since His command (*amr*) was manifestly at variance with His will (*irāda*), God intended it to be ignored. Iblīs insists that he alone, of all the heavenly beings, was perspicacious enough to see through God's wily stratagem and pass the test.

There is no denying that in the case of Iblīs there seems to be a conflict between God's will (*irāda*) and His actual, concrete command (*amr*). What is debatable, however, is the course of action one should pursue in the face of such a paradox. Iblīs chose *irāda* and incurred the fatal consequences.

> The story is told that he (Al-Junayd) said, 'There was a time when I very much wanted to see Iblīs—may God's curse be upon him! One day, I was standing at the door of the mosque when an old man headed towards me coming from a distance. When I got a good look at him, terror seized my heart. When he came close to me, I said, "Who are you, old man? My eyes cannot bear to look upon you because of their terror, nor can my heart bear to think on you because of its fear." He replied, "I am the object of your desire." I said, "O accursed one, what was it that held you back from bowing to Adam?" He answered, "O Junayd, what gave you the idea that I would bow to other than Him?" ' Al-Junayd said, 'I was stunned at his words. But a voice inside me said, "Say to him, 'You lie! If you were truly a servant, you would not have overstepped God's command and prohibition.' " He (Iblīs) heard the words from my heart and he shouted, "You have burnt me, by God!" and he disappeared.'[185]

But how does one obey a command that contradicts the will of God? The problem of coping with the conflicting demands of God's *irāda* and *amr* was of major concern to the Sufis quite early on. Al-Makkī, in his *Qūt al-qulūb*, tries to make sense out of what seems a logical impasse. Did God, when He ordered Iblīs to bow, at the same time will his bowing or not? Al-Makkī hedges; God did will it and He did not will it, Al-Makkī tells us. He did will that it be legally enjoined upon Iblīs to bow; but He did not will that the command be actualized, because the basic principle to be observed at all times is that nothing comes into existence without God's willing it to be. If God had willed the actualization and coming into existence of Iblīs' bow, so it would have been. What does not exist was not willed. In this case, therefore, there were two separate things willed by God: the order to bow and Iblīs' refusal. The actual coming into existence of a thing is the clear proof of God's having willed it to be so.

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[185] Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, p. 163. The same tale is repeated in ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, p. 426.

God, therefore, willed the order to bow and the frustration of the order; this paradox is the source of all the anxiety and tribulation. God orders one thing and wills the coming into existence of its opposite. What to do? Al-Makkī turns to Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī for a final judgement in the matter. Tradition relates that Ḥasan was confronted by an opponent who said there would be neither logic nor justice in God's decreeing something for someone and then punishing him for it. Ḥasan answers that God does not punish because of the unfolding of His will, but because the individual has gone against one of God's commands.[186]

The point seems to be that neither Iblīs, nor anyone for that matter, has the right to try to plumb the depths of God's being and distinguish between His will and His command; the challenge is to accept both in humble submission, even when they are beyond human logic. And one demonstrates one's submission by conforming to God's command while at the same time recognizing the inscrutability of His will. In embracing both, one also embraces the consequences they entail, hoping that God in His mercy will look with compassion on His creature faced with such a predicament.

The Sufis consider this confrontation of Iblīs with the Scylla and Charybdis of God's *irāda* and *amr* to be the major constitutive element in his personal tragedy. Even if one admits culpability on his part for not obeying the command of God, one cannot help but see him also as a tragic victim of noble stature, whose downfall does not blot out completely the strength of his character.

A short treatise that combines in a particularly striking fashion both an analysis of *irāda* and *amr* and a dramatic presentation of Iblīs as tragic victim is the *Taflīs Iblīs* (*The Bankruptcy of Iblīs*) by the 13th century spiritual writer Ibn Ghānim Al-Maqdisī. Because this work is generally unfamiliar and has not received much scholarly attention, the main lines of its argumentation will be summarized and a translation of important segments of Iblīs' tragic soliloquy will be provided.

Ibn Ghānim describes the whole of human life as a circle whose circumference is *amr*, God's command, and whose center is God's will, *irāda*. The crisis occurs when there is a logical conflict between the two: *amr* says "Do!" and *irāda* says "No, do not!" To choose one of the two, to devote oneself to *irāda* at the expense of *amr*, or vice versa, leads to destruction. Those who bind both together are the right-guided; however, their number is very few.

Those who would cling to *amr*, ignoring God's *irāda*, thereby ascribe the creation of actions to their own selves. God created the individual

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[186] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:260-261.

self, they say, but He has no part in its evil deeds. The self alone is, therefore, the source of evil actions. This is manifestly associationism, asserts Ibn Ghānim, for it makes man the creator of these evil actions. If you believe that God does not create, decree, or will sin and evil, and if you believe that you, by yourself, will it, then you have brought something into existence apart from God's will. In fact, your will has overcome God's will and judgement; your will is steadfast and enduring, while His is blotted out. What greater vice is there than this?[187]

Those who ignore *amr* and focus completely on God's *irāda*, assign all actions, even creaturely ones, to the creative will of God. They claim to be compelled to act, vanquished by God's will. External commands and prohibitions, as well as Holy Books, prophets, the Law, etc., are considered valueless, for these call one to make a choice, a power whose existence they deny. These followers of *irāda* quote the Qurʾān to the effect that God saves whomever He wills and condemns whomever He wills, and they assert that, if He had so desired, He could have led all men aright.

They do not see that these words are proof against their own position, for the fact is that God has not chosen to condemn or save all men out of hand. He has permitted them to participate in the process of their own salvation or condemnation through His *amr*, His external command. This command becomes explicit through the revelations of the prophets, the Qurʾān, and the *sunna*; man has the power to accept or reject it freely.

Ibn Ghānim compares the relationship between man's freedom and God's creative will to two men carrying a heavy load; one is able to carry it while the other is weak, and incapable of managing alone. They pick up the load and help each other along the way, although the first is the one who really possesses the power. The weak individual participates as a kind of partner, actively sharing in the transporting of the load. In the same way, while God's will is the ultimate source of power for anything to emerge, He also uses His *amr* to present man with orders and prohibitions that he can accept or reject using the willpower God grants him. In this way man is enabled to participate in the process of his own salvation or condemnation.[188]

The first to have embroiled himself in this morass was Iblīs. When confronted with God's paradox, he seized the crutch of *irāda* in order to save himself, saying, "You have led me astray." Subsequently he flung away the staff of the will and hung himself on the ropes of *amr* with his words:

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[187] ʿIzz Ad-Dīn ʿAbd As-Salām Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Ghānim Al-Maqdisī, *Taflīs Iblīs* (Cairo: n.p., 1277 A.H.-1860 C.E.). The text has wrongly been attributed to Ibn ʿArabī whose name appears as author on this printed edition. See pp. 3-4.

[188] *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6.

"Truly I will embellish for them all things upon the earth and I will lead them astray." By the former he initiated the sect of *jabrīya*, necessitarianism, because he abandoned all hope of personal freedom; by the latter he formed the sect of *qadarīya*, radical freedom, because he ascribed his acts to himself alone. Iblīs was blind to the Straight Path and heedless of those other angelic travellers of the Way who were devoted to both *irāda* and *amr*. He became the first to despair of the mercy of God, the first to deceive others, the first to befoul the Path with sin. But despite his rejection and condemnation by God, Iblīs has gathered around himself armies of satans and *jinns* who roam the world devouring the souls of men, luring mankind to perdition with every manner of worldly delight.[189]

Ibn Ghānim goes on to explain that he has written his book to help put a stop to the perfidy of Iblīs and his cohorts. Many are Iblīs' stratagems, but Ibn Ghānim vows to confront him at every turn, and he is confident of success because Iblīs' house is built on *waswasa*, the whisperings of temptation, while his own is built on fundamental religious precepts. Iblīs, however, is not to be underestimated as a foe, for whenever he is driven to the corner of *amr*, he flees to the opposite corner of *irāda*; and whenever he is trapped in the narrow passage of the Law, he flees to the expanse of Divine Majesty.

Ibn Ghānim addresses Iblīs boldly, recounting the list of divine favors accorded him in ages past—his honor and glory, his role as proclaimer of divine unity, his fiery light, his preeminent knowledge, his position as teacher of the angels and chief of the Cherubim, his perfection in worship, night vigils, and asceticism. And then Adam was created, and because of overweening pride Iblīs was blind to his true nature. If he had discerned the actual difference between his own rank and that of Adam, Iblīs would not have rejected the *amr* of God. And this is the very reason why God has subjected creatures to His *amr* and not simply to compulsion, to test them and discover their true nature. Iblīs has exceeded the bounds of servanthood and continues to do so. Why, then, should he be surprised that he is distanced, and condemned to everlasting fire?[190]

Iblīs retorts with arguments that, by now, are quite familiar: God produces what He wills; no one has any power to resist. He has willed for me what you have seen; I am blameless because whatever I have done is ultimately attributable to the will of God. For me God has decreed a curse; for Adam, mercy.

Ibn Ghānim refuses to allow Iblīs to equate his situation with that of

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[189] *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.
[190] *Ibid.*, pp. 8-11.

Adam. When Adam saw that the arrows of *irāda* were piercing his veins, and that the pen of Destiny had written its verdict, he seized both sides of the rope and ascribed the guilt to himself. This is the correct course of action for a servant in the presence of the omnipotence of divinity. But Iblīs not only rejected the command of God, he also accused God of being the ultimate cause of his sin, rather than accepting the blame himself.

Iblīs' opposition to God's command is even more contemptible than his pride because it implies that, somehow, he has access to the hidden mysteries of God's will. In fact he has no such knowledge, for God's will cannot be encompassed by the understanding of creatures. God reveals of His will what He wishes, and no more; Iblīs is in no way gifted with foreknowledge concerning the outcome of God's will and command. This would enable him to claim that he did not bow because he knew in advance that God did not intend the actualization of the command. Iblīs' refusal springs only from the corruption of faith, and jealousy sparked by pride.[191]

Iblīs has no rebuttal with which to counter Ibn Ghānim's accusations; he can only reiterate his sense of tragic betrayal, hoping to win by emotional appeal what he could not gain through logical argumentation.

> 'Do you believe there is any worshipper more devoted than I, or anyone in ʿIrāq more learned than I? There is no preaching more truthful than mine, nor any ideas more healthy than mine. He (God) said to me, "Bow to another than Me!" I replied, "Never to another!" He cried, "My curse be upon you!" I said, "No harm; for if You draw me close to You, that is Your prerogative, and if You drive me away, that is Your prerogative too." He asked, "Do you do this out of arrogance or pride?" I answered, "My Lord, anyone who has known You in his life but once, or been alone with You in his lifetime for but a moment, or been companion to You on the Path of Your love for but an hour, it is only right that he boast how it came to pass. For I have passed lifetimes with You, and I have lived in Your love. The visible signs? How many pages have I written about Your oneness, night and day! How much have I studied about Your glory and praise, among things revealed and things secret! These visible signs are witness for me. The lands acknowledge my truth; the night and the day place their trust in me. Where was Adam while I was chief of the angels brought near?" '
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> 'You there, do you think that I have sinned against the divine plan and have rejected the decree of God? Or that change has really changed me? By His glory and the majesty of His decree, no! But the Creator of the beautiful and the corrupt, the sick and the healthy, has joined together the thing and its opposite in order to manifest the perfection of His power, and the splendor of His might; for things only become known through their opposites. From the first, in the exalted assembly of rulers, He made me the one most knowledgeable about things of beauty, and I adorned the spheres

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[191] *Ibid.*, pp. 11-15.

with them. I was also the most knowledgeable of them about *tawḥīd* (proclaiming the oneness of God) and their leader in glorification and praise.'

'Once the young students had acquainted themselves with the rituals for their proclaiming God's unity, and had carefully ascertained the wording of their hymns of glorification and praise, He transferred me from the lofty world to the lower world that I might now teach them what is the opposite of this, and paint corruptions in glowing colors for them, and lay open to them scandalous deeds. For both on earth and in the heavens, I am the expert of experts, teacher of teachers, a miracle of the power of God, witness in the presence of Wisdom. Who in the Divine Presence is closer than I? Who in reputation is more famous than I? I am honored that He remembered me, even if He cursed me. I am proud that He looked on me, even if He drove me away. In my gnosis He disavowed me; in my bewilderment about Him, He confused me more. For my fervor, He transformed me; for my service to Him, He deserted me; for my companionship with Him, He made me a pariah; for my attentiveness towards Him, He cut me off. I used to mingle with the faithful ones, but He isolated me. And now I devote my time to Him and I heal my state with Him. For I used to serve Him for my own prosperity, but prosperity has clearly passed away. And if I have fallen from the eye of His favor, I have dropped into the eye of His essence....'

'You there! I encountered Moses on the mountain road of Sinai, and he was overjoyed at what he had been given. He said to me, "What prevented you from bowing?" "What prevented my performing the bow you mention is that I have been summoned to proclaim one God alone, and if I had bowed to Adam, I would have been like you. You were summoned once to: 'Look at the mountain!' and you looked. I was summoned once to: 'Bow to Adam!' but I did not bow at my summons because of my sense of its import." He replied, "But you abandoned the command of God!" I said, "He did not really command me." He answered, "Did He not tell you 'Bow to Adam'?" I retorted, "That was the command of trial, not the command of His will. If it had been the command of His will, I would have bowed." He said, "But surely your form has been disfigured." I replied, "O Moses, do not put credence in this state of Iblīs, just because it changes. The gnosis is sound; it has not been transformed, even if the outward person has changed. The serenity remains; it has not been disturbed." Moses said to me, "Do you remember Him now, even after your expulsion?" I answered, "O Moses, I know no other than Him, no one at all. I remember no other than Him, ever, even if He should torment me with eternal fire, O Moses—me, who am the longest in service, the highest in favor, the most learned in knowledge; me, who am the most knowledgeable of them in bowing, the nearest of them to the Existence, the most faithful of them to the covenants, the closest of them to God. But my Lord said to me, 'You have no free choice.' I replied, 'O Lord, to You belong the free choices, all of them. And my free choice belongs to You. And if You have brought me down, well, You are the Exalted One. And if You have prevented me from bowing, You are the Invincible. And if I have sinned in speech, You are the All-Hearing; and if You had willed that I bow to him, I would be the obedient one....' " '

'He forsook my record book, but He did not forsake my name; He abandoned my worth, but He did not abandon my memory. His grace is

always upon me, and His charity directed towards me, even if He is angry at me. My abundant love is my booty; I have been content with my closeness to Him, and with my closeness to His obedient people. I never stop vying with the people of His love in *dhikr*, nor stop sharing with them in the gift of His piety. For I have a portion in every deed, and an appropriate share in every heart.'[192]

In order to capitalize on this share he owns in every human heart, Iblīs begs God for a respite: "By Your power, truly I will lead them all astray!" God is shocked at the arrogance of his words: "O accursed one, do you swear by My power at the same time that I am cursing you?"

'O Lord, there is nothing more powerful in Your sight than one who has worshipped You. If it were not for my love of Your power, I would not have embraced You as God; if it were not for the majesty of Your power, I would not have refused Adam the bow. For I have become powerful by Your power, and I do not cease being so; for I have humbled myself to none other than You.'

'And so I swear by Your power, and with it I have gained power over those like me, and with it I have no need of outward appearances. And I will make an exception of those who are protected by Your gift of impeccability, those of Your servants who are faithful. And my making this exception springs from the nobility of my praise, the sincerity of my allegiance, and the righteousness of my claim. For I bow to no other face, and I swear by no one else's power.[193]

God promises Iblīs a troop of followers with whom he can afflict mankind. In addition, whoever follows him from among men and women will also join his hordes. Iblīs expresses his gratitude but stubbornly demands to be reimbursed for some of what he has lost. What, for example, is God willing to compensate for the loss of his robe of honor? The answer he receives is a curse. God warns him not to gloat over being allowed to waylay the sons of Adam, for no one, not even Iblīs, can block the passage of the love of God. Only the residue from the cosmic sifting of souls will be left for him, the residue of human chaff destined for the fire. Anxious to be rid of this malevolent creature, God drives Iblīs away to do his evil deeds, but with the pointed reminder that his final recompense will be to join the souls of the damned in the blaze of Gehenna.

To counter the reader's apprehensions of Iblīs, Ibn Ghānim recites an extensive litany of God's deeds of kindness and compassion. Is there

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[192] *Ibid.*, pp. 16-21. Sections of pages 18, 20, and 21 have been omitted.

In the text of Ibn Ghānim there are strong resonances and, occasionally, verbatim borrowings from Ḥusayn Ibn Manṣūr Al-Ḥallāj, especially Al-Ḥallāj's *Kitāb aṭ-ṭawāsīn* which will be discussed in Ch. 3. Ibn Ghānim has, however, skillfully woven the Ḥallājian material within his own work to create a vision of Iblīs that is clearly distinct from that of his predecessor.

[193] *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

someone who appeals, someone who repents, someone who is in need? God will come to his assistance. Whereas the power of Iblīs is localized in man's bloodstream, God's power cannot be encompassed by the heavens or the earth; yet, at the same time, He can be an intimate of man's soul. If a man but thinks on God for a moment, God will shower him with blessings; if he moves toward God the distance of a cubit, God will move a fathom; and if he comes to God walking, God will come to him running.[194]

Iblīs can no longer bear to listen to this hymn in honor of God's mercy, for he cannot accept the verdict that he will never be allowed to share in God's saving grace:

> 'O Lord, I swear by Your power by which You humbled me, and by Your decree by which You determined my fate, if I am forbidden to look on You, I will look upon him who is allowed to look on You; and if I am contemptible in Your sight, I will cling to the hem of one who is esteemed in Your sight....'[195]
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> 'You there! And so He has made me the reason for the emergence of error, and the pretext for turning attention to the argument about command and prohibition. Otherwise there honestly would be no reason for His command, nor any reasonableness to His judgement, nor any reason for the distancing of His enemies. For He has no need of His creation; He is self-sufficient and eternally worshipped. The good deeds of the just benefit Him not, nor do the evil deeds of sinners harm Him. His judgement has been executed, His decree carried out, and His pen has dried up.'
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> 'Because He is the absolute being in His sovereignty, neither is His doctrine changed in His presence, nor is His judgement contested against Him. His speech is truth; His promise, sincerity, whether He has promised redemption or threatened obliteration. To Him belongs the volition to menace, and to Him belongs the will to promise and to threaten. To Him belongs the power to punish without reason, and to be angry at the best of achievements. He, in everything, is just. To Him belong created beings and the command; in His hand is advantage and harm. He is not questioned about what He does, but they (the creatures) are questioned. Everything is passing to destruction but His face; to Him belongs judgement, and to Him you are returning. Amen.'[196]

4. *Iblīs: frustration at the hands of holy men*

The tragedy inherent in Iblīs' character unfolds itself further in each new confrontation. The emotional power of his dialogues and soliloquies in the *Mathnawī* and *Taflīs Iblīs* can hardly be equalled, while his less momentous encounters serve to reinforce the futility and hopelessness of his position.

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[194] *Ibid.*, pp. 22-25. See also A. J. Wensinck, *Concordance*, 2:176 for other references to this famous *ḥadīth*.

[195] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

[196] *Ibid.*, p. 27. See also Qurʾān 28:88.

One particular type of Sufi tale plays heavily on the themes of Iblīs' frustration and impotence, frustration at the hands of Sufi masters and impotence in the face of the spiritual power granted by God to His chosen servants. No longer is Iblīs the crafty manipulator of the *nafs*, the dissimulator who employs even the good to achieve his ends; in this genre of Iblīs literature, he is stymied, if not defeated, from the outset.

The Qurʾānic basis for the conviction that the goodness of the elect renders Iblīs harmless is found in the words of God to Iblīs in which He denies him authority and power over those who remain faithful and upright.[197] The Sufi writers take this Qurʾānic theme and elaborate on it for the edification and encouragement of both Sufis and ordinary faithful alike.

> John, son of Zakarīya, said, 'I asked Iblīs—may God curse him!—"O enemy of God, why have you despaired of the faithful ones?" He said, "O John, someone like you asks that? Truly the hearts of the faithful are like two-sided mirrors that shine with the light of meditation and in which the rays of *dhikr* quiver. Their hearts are like oceans full of fire and light. Every time I try to get near them, the light of their fire blinds me and the fire of their light burns me...." '[198]

This attainment of spiritual perfection is not brought about by any miraculous means, but is, in most cases, God's reward for meticulous adherence to the prescriptions of the law and arduous spiritual training under the guidance of a *shaykh*. The act of bowing in prayer is, as has been mentioned, a particularly potent, symbolic gesture of one's allegiance to God and rejection of Iblīs, because it was over a bow that his downfall occurred. When Iblīs beholds the prostrations of the faithful, it is a cause for him to weep and feel self-pity.[199]

Not only bowing in prayer, but also the observance of all that the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* enjoin, make up the progressive steps along the Path of Righteousness. Al-Makkī makes particular mention that the satans of the two worlds scatter at a man's performance of ablutions and his entrance into prayer,[200] and that Iblīs is reduced to an emaciated, back-broken wretch by those who observe carefully the law and who are not boastful of their good deeds.[201]

Al-Makkī, of course, shows concern for the renewal of the inner man at the same time that one occupies oneself with external observance. Only

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[197] See Qurʾān 15:42, 17:65, 34:21, 38:42-43.

[198] Al-Makkī, *ʿIlm al-qulūb*, pp. 169-170. Other references to Iblīs' inability to harm men of faith and holiness can be found in the following: Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:92-93; Al-Kalābādhī, *Kitāb at-taʿarruf*, p. 75.

[199] See Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb ar-riʿāya*, p. 236, and Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 1, book 4, p. 149.

[200] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:197-198.

[201] *Ibid.*, 2:243.

an inner transformation provides the strength to withstand successfully the continuous temptations of the Iblīs-*nafs*.

> A queen of the people of Israel enticed one of her servants, saying, 'Put water in the bath for me so I can wash.' Thereupon he climbed to a certain place in the castle and threw himself off. Almighty God revealed to the angel of the wind, 'Cling to My servant!' and he clung to him until he put him down on the ground on his two feet, very gently. Iblīs was asked, 'Did you not lead him astray?' He replied, 'I have no power over one who has broken his passions and sacrificed himself to God Most High.'[202]

A group who are singled out for special blessing and protection in the Muslim community are the prophets; they are granted the gift of being *maʿṣūm*, impeccable. As soon as one of them has been appointed to this sacred office, he is completely out of the reach of Iblīs and his devils. The Sufi literature reflects this tradition in the stories it relates about these blessed men.

Al-Muḥāsibī describes Iblīs slapping his head in frustration over the futile attempts of his soldiers to capture the soul of a certain man. They finally discover that he is *maʿṣūm*.[203] Al-Makkī echoes the same when he states that Iblīs' only hold over the prophet Ayyūb (Job) was that he cried out in sickness, nothing else.[204] Al-Ghazālī, in turn, recounts a conversation of Iblīs with John the Baptist in which Iblīs discusses the different character types that make up mankind, and his own particular successes and failures in seducing each. However, those who are like John, Iblīs adds, are untouchable because they are impeccable, *maʿṣūm*.[205] Sufi literature, of course, refers to Jesus and his unique privilege, attested in the *ḥadīth*, of being spared from birth the touch of Satan's goad, a miraculous sign of both his prophetic election and his impeccability.[206]

The Sufi tradition also recognizes that important *shaykhs* and holy men possess an equal ability to remain free from the taint of Satan. Although they are not considered *maʿṣūm* because of their office, they are protected (*maḥfūẓ*) because they have attained a high level of spiritual perfection with God's help. Not only are they enabled to defend themselves from Satan's onslaughts, but they are also capable of physically overpowering Iblīs in order to force him to do their bidding. At times they even inflict positive harm on his person.

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[202] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:335. ʿAṭṭār tells a story with a similar theme about Rābiʿa Al-ʿAdawīya to the effect that no one, not even Iblīs, can afflict her because of her saintliness. See ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, p. 77.

[203] Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb ar-riʿāya*, p. 81.

[204] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:55.

[205] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 3, book 21, pp. 39-40.

[206] *Ibid.*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 33. See also Ch. 1, p. 47.

ʿAṭṭār relates two stories, one of Sahl At-Tustarī and one of Abū Yazīd Al-Bisṭāmī, in which Iblīs suffers badly at the hands of these renowned mystics. Sahl tells of a chance encounter with Iblīs among a group of people; he proceeds to seize him and tie him up:

> I said, 'I will not let you go until you speak words attesting to the unity of God.' He (Iblīs) stood in the middle and spoke a chapter on God's unity. If only the wise men of the age had been present! They would have been astounded.[207]

Al-Bisṭāmī is not content just to force Iblīs to profess faith in God; he prefers more drastic action in order to teach Iblīs his place. During an audience which Al-Bisṭāmī granted a group of wandering ascetics, their leader, Aḥmad, remarked:

> 'O *shaykh*, I saw Iblīs hung up at the head of your alleyway.' 'That is correct,' he replied, 'he had made a pact with me not to wander about Bisṭām. And now he has tempted someone so that he has bloodied himself. The agreement stipulates that they crucify the culprit at the king's gate.'[208]

Islamic tradition uniquely combines the office of prophet and the attainment of mystic perfection in the person of Muḥammad. His encounters with Iblīs are, therefore, more momentous, highlighting both Muḥammad's prophethood and sanctity in contrast to Iblīs' feeble lies and pathetic artifices. His foolish attacks against the prophet border on the suicidal. Al-Ghazālī tells us that once he dared pester Muḥammad for an extended period with the result that the messenger of God seized Iblīs by the throat, and choked him until his tongue hung out and his saliva ran down the prophet's hands. It was only because someone finally restrained Muḥammad that his grip was loosed.[209]

A particularly interesting encounter between Iblīs and Muḥammad occurs in a lengthy tale found appended to the printed edition of Ibn ʿArabī's *Shajarat al-kawn*, which has been referred to earlier in this chapter. Here, too, from the outset, Muḥammad is in complete control; Iblīs is but a pawn, subject totally to the power of the prophet. The setting for the story is a gathering made up of the prophet and some of the early companions. A voice is heard outside the door urgently begging

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[207] ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, pp. 311-312. The question arises how much credence one should put in such words of Iblīs, especially when they are spoken under duress. It has already been shown that he uses good words and deeds to deceive. On this very point Al-Ghazālī describes an encounter between Iblīs and Jesus in which Iblīs tells Jesus to recite the Muslim profession of faith proclaiming God's unity. Jesus refuses, acknowledging that the words are true, but affirming also that there must be some hidden trap since the recommendation comes from Iblīs. See Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 30.

[208] ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, p. 175.

[209] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol. 3, book 21, pp. 37-38.

permission to enter. Muḥammad asks the others if they recognize the voice, but all remain silent. It is Iblīs, he tells them. ʿUmar jumps up and begs the prophet's permission to kill the wretch, but Muḥammad refuses, reminding ʿUmar that Iblīs has been granted respite by God. More to the point, Muḥammad tells them that Iblīs has come on a special mission; they should listen carefully to his words. At that moment Iblīs enters the room in the form of an old man, blind in one eye:

> In his beard were seven hairs like horse hairs. His eyes were set far apart. His head was like the head of a large elephant, his tusk-like teeth sticking out like the tusks of a boar. His lips were like the lips of a bull, and he said, 'Peace be upon you, O Muḥammad! Peace be upon you, O gathering of Muslims!'[210]

Iblīs explains that he has not come willingly before Muḥammad and his companions, but only under compulsion.

> 'An angel from Almighty God came to me and said, "God Most High orders you to go to Muḥammad—may God bless him and grant him peace!—you, who are despised, despicable, and humiliated. And tell him about your wiles against the sons of Adam, and about your seducing them. Tell him the whole truth about everything he asks you. By My power and majesty, if you tell him one lie and do not speak truthfully, surely I will reduce you to ashes which the wind will carry off, and your enemies will gloat over your demise."
>
> 'So I have come to you, O Muḥammad, as I was ordered. Ask me about anything you wish....'[211]

Iblīs is completely subject to the power of God, and, through God, to Muḥammad who, as prophet and saint, is a locus for the manifestation of divine power on earth. Muḥammad begins to question him, and for the next several pages, the main body of the text, Iblīs assumes the role of a criminal who has been coerced into a confession. Muḥammad asks about the things that are most hateful to him. Iblīs answers that it is Muḥammad himself whom he fears most, and, after him, the faithful followers of Islam whose prayers make him tremble with fever, whose fasts bind him in fetters, whose pilgrimages drive him to madness, whose Qurʾān recitations waste him away, and whose almsgiving cuts through him like a saw.[212]

Muḥammad gives thanks and praise to God for the blessings He has showered on His faithful, especially His protection against Iblīs. Iblīs retorts that Muḥammad and his friends had best not succumb to a false sense of security, for he continues to flow in man's bloodstream. He will

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[210] Ibn ʿArabī, "Ḥikāyat Iblīs," p. 33.
[211] *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.
[212] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

ensnare the wise as well as the foolish, the educated and the ignorant, the profligate and the devoted worshipper. He boasts that he has at his disposal seventy thousand satans to do his bidding, and to each one he assigns a different group to deal with: the learned, the old, children, *shaykhs*, youths, ascetics, etc. Do you remember what happened to the monk Barṣīṣā, Iblīs asks, he who had the power of healing? He was not left alone until he fornicated, murdered, and became a heretic.[213]

Muḥammad asks, finally, what things Iblīs most desires from God. Iblīs enumerates many: to be part of man's possessions and one of his family; to share in all ill-gotten goods, forbidden money, and food, and all things over which the name of God has not been mentioned. He desires to be part of the child conceived during unblessed intercourse, and to join those who ride out in the pursuit of unlawful booty. He asks God for a home; God gives him the baths; a mosque, He gives him the bazaar; a Qurʾān, He gives him poetry; a call to prayer, He gives him the psalms; a bed-fellow, He gives him a drunk; helpers, He gives him Qadarites; brothers, He gives him spendthrifts. Lastly he asks to be hidden from the sight of the sons of men; God grants his wish and makes him part of their very lifeblood.[214] Nevertheless, even with all these gifts, Iblīs remains impotent to overturn the power of good, as he would wish.

> 'O Muḥammad, I have no real power to lead astray, rather I am tempter and dissembler. If I had in my hand the power to lead astray, I would not leave on the face of the earth anyone of those who proclaim, "There is no deity but God, and Muḥammad is His messenger!", nor anyone who fasts, nor anyone who prays. Similarly you possess no right-guidance in yourself, but rather you are a messenger, a transmitter. If you did possess in your hand right-guidance, you would not leave on the face of the earth an unbeliever. Nevertheless you are the proof of God to His creatures, while I am the reason for a man's misfortune. The happy man is he whom God has made happy in his mother's womb; the wretched man is he whom God has made wretched in his mother's womb....'
>
> Then Muḥammad—may God bless him and grant him peace!—asked, 'O father of gall, would it be possible for you to repent and return to God, if, at the same time, I guarantee Paradise for you?' He replied, 'O messenger of God, the matter has been decreed, and the pen has dried up concerning what He is bringing into existence until the Day of Resurrection. Praise to Him who has made you the lord of the prophets and spokesman for the people of Paradise, who elected you and chose you. Me He has made lord of the miserable and spokesman for the people of the fire. I am wretched, an outcast.'[215]

The impression of Iblīs that is conveyed in this fable of Ibn ʿArabī is that of an evil force whose power has been neutralized and suspended, if

[213] *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.
[214] *Ibid.*, pp. 36-38. See also Ch. 1, pp. 39-40 for a similar tale.
[215] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

only for a moment, because of God's power which is manifest through the person of Muḥammad. There are similarities with the shorter tales in which Iblīs acts as *shaykh*-teacher; here, however, the force of coercion is far more in evidence. Iblīs does not teach willingly about his activities in the lives of men, but only under duress. He seems very much out of his element, for there is little he can do when the spiritual might of the prophet-saint asserts itself.

The degradation and manipulation to which Iblīs' character is subjected at the hands of the prophets and mystics reaches a high point in those tales in which he is made the object of cynical humor. Rūmī offers an example in his story of the old crone who proceeds to outdo her devil-mentor in sacrilegious deeds; Iblīs is nonplussed, if not thoroughly shocked, at her ingenuity:

> Since that yellowed crone wanted to get married,
> that lusty lady plucked her eyebrows clean.
> Then the old hag put the mirror in front of her face,
> to adorn her cheek, face, and mouth.
> With gusto she bedaubed her face with rouge, several times.
> But the creases on her face did not become more hidden.
> And so that foul crone started cutting small bits out of the Qurʾān.
> And she kept sticking them on her face
> that the creases on her face might be concealed,
> that she might be the precious stone in the ring of beautiful women.
> She kept putting the small pieces all over her face,
> but when she put her veil on, they fell off.
> Again she would stick the pieces on with spittle,
> all over her face.
> Again that precious gem would set her veil aright,
> and the pieces of paper would fall to the ground off her face.
> Since she tried many different ways and they still fell off,
> she cried, 'A hundred curses on Iblīs!'
> In but a moment Iblīs appeared and said,
> 'O hapless, dried-up whore,
> In all my life I have never contemplated this!
> I have never seen this done by any other whore but you.
> You have sown a seed unique in the field of ignominy;
> you have not left one Qurʾān in the world.
> You are a hundred Iblīses, army upon army.
> Leave me alone, O foul old crone!'[216]

Iblīs is perhaps most foolish in those stories where he is accidentally driven off by some innocent gesture of a saint. Such is Al-Mayhanī's tale in which Iblīs is discovered in the midst of a skirmish between the Arabs

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[216] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 6, l. 1268-1280, p. 1106. There are two other occasions in the *Mathnawī* where Iblīs is outdone by his own followers: Book 5, l. 2303-2305, p. 939; Book 6, l. 4469-4470, p. 1262.

and the Byzantines. "What are you doing here?" a soldier asks. Iblīs explains that he was passing through Mayhana at the time when Abū Saʿīd was on his way home from the mosque. As he passed by, Abū Saʿīd sneezed and threw Iblīs to the precincts of Byzantium.[217] In similar fashion, ʿAṭṭār tells of the time when Iblīs was driven off by Muḥammad Ibn Aslam Aṭ-Ṭūsī's coughing during his ablutions. Iblīs, as a result, is seen falling to earth in a foreign country.[218] Finally the most comical incidents are perhaps those when Iblīs is driven to such frustration that he can do nothing but jump up and down while pouring dirt on his head.[219]

There is danger that, because of the influence of such derisive tales, Iblīs be treated simply as a buffoon. Rūmī is quick to dispel any such notions, even though, as we have seen, he joins in poking fun at Iblīs. The spiritual superiority of faith, he explains, is not a natural right of mankind, but a gift from God. Unearned spiritual gifts should not, therefore, give rise to smugness or to feelings of superiority. Although Iblīs has sunk low, one must not overlook his former stature in the sight of God, nor the fact that it is only through God's compassion that we have been spared a similar fate.

One day Adam looked on the wretched Iblīs
with contempt and disdain.
He manifested arrogance and conceit;
he laughed at the predicament of the accursed Iblīs.
The jealousy of God thundered aloud, 'O upright fellow,
are you not aware of the hidden secret?
Were He to turn the fur inside out,
He would rip the mountain from its root and base.
At that moment He would tear the veil from off a hundred Adams,
And bring forth a hundred Iblīses newly converted to Islam.'
Adam cried, 'I beg forgiveness for this look!
I will never again think such presumptuous thoughts.'[220]

To make fun of Iblīs or show him contempt must have its limits; to ignore the tragic grandeur of his personality is to misuse him, and, ironically, leads to the same arrogant self-assertion that was at the heart of his own downfall. "Iblīs," ʿAṭṭār explains, "is the sacrificed one of God. It is not manliness to hurl a stone at God's sacrifice."[221]

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[217] Al-Mayhanī, *Asrār at-tawḥīd*, p. 288.

[218] Farīd Ad-Dīn ʿAṭṭār Nayshābūrī, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, 2 vols., ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (reprint ed., Tehrān: Kitābkhāna-yi dānishgāh, 1336 A.H. solar), 1:217. The cough as the reason for the disappearance of Iblīs is mentioned in the Nicholson edition but not in the more recent one of Muḥammad Istiʿlāmī. Istiʿlāmī's edition has been used, and will continue to be used, throughout this essay.

[219] ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, p. 646.

[220] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 1, l. 3893-3898, p. 192. The same basic theme is repeated by Rūmī in Book 1, l. 3290-3291, p. 163 and Book 2, l. 3040-3045, pp. 343-344.

[221] ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, p. 643.

In the same vein, the *Sīra* of Ibn Khafīf relates that Abū ʾḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk was once having a discussion with Iblīs during which Iblīs spoke a sacred verse. Enraged at this impudence of Iblīs, Abū ʾḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk struck him a terrible blow. Much later Abū ʾḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk was on his way back from Makka when he came to a fast flowing river he was obliged to cross. He hesitated, unsure whether or not the river was fordable. Soon an old man came by, and, without a second thought, walked into the river and moved across with ease. Abū ʾḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk said to himself that he could do as well as an old man, and so he plunged into the river. No sooner did he reach the middle than the water overcame him. God, however, looked kindly upon him and Abū ʾd-Ḍaḥḥāk was able to struggle safely to the other shore. There he found the old man waiting. "Have you repented," he asked Abū ʾḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk, "so that hereafter you never pass judgement against me?"[222]

Al-Hujwīrī, too, preserves a sense of the enduring tragedy represented by the life of Iblīs, while also recognizing him as a force capable of steering mankind to destruction. The fable he relates is attributed to Abū ʾl-Ḥārith Al-Bunānī:

> I was very faithful in my attendance at religious gatherings of audition, when, one night, someone came to my hermitage and said, 'A group of those seeking the threshold of God Most High has assembled, and they await your presence, if you will be so gracious....'

Abū ʾl-Ḥārith accompanied the stranger until they reached the place where the group had gathered. The participants warmly welcomed the new arrival. The leader of the group, an old man, rose from the circle and addressed Abū ʾl-Ḥārith:

> 'If you permit, some verses will be recited.' I consented. Two men with marvelous voices began reciting verses that poets had composed about separation. All the participants rose up, caught in ecstasy, and sang beautiful chants while they performed graceful movements. I was in continual amazement at their state. Their rapture lasted until close to morning, whereupon the old man addressed me, 'O *shaykh*, do you not wish to ask me, "Who are you? and this group, who are they?" ' I replied, 'My bashfulness in your presence has kept me from asking questions.' He said that he was the accursed Iblīs and that this group was his offspring. 'There are two advantages I obtain in these sessions and in making music: one is that I bewail the pain of my separation and the days of my former glory; the other is that I lure devout men from the Path and I hurl them into sin.'[223]

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[222] Ad-Daylamī, *Sīrat-i Abū ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Al-Khafīf Ash-Shīrāzī*, pp. 160-161.
[223] Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, pp. 536-537.

5. *Iblīs: tragic yet evil*

What is the final end of this complex, tragic figure, the condemned lover-tempter? What is to be the final verdict on him? As will become clearer in the next chapter, more than one judgement is offered by the Sufi mystics. However, among the authors who have been discussed so far, there is almost total unanimity:[224] despite the innate nobility of his tragic character, Iblīs is an essentially evil and positively malevolent figure, whose former power and glory have been so corrupted that he actively plots the destruction of man, using any possible means, even the good. He is to be shunned at all cost; vigilance against him must be constant and unrelenting.

This conviction has colored much of the Sufis' reflections and theorizing about the ambiguities that manifest themselves in Iblīs' own life-history. In the minds of these spiritual writers, such ambiguity is not sufficient reason to kindle the hope of his eventual restoration to divine favor.

As Rūmī remarks, since Iblīs' sin is an innate part of his very being, there is no hope of penitence for him.[225] Sarī As-Saqaṭī confirms this opinion, reasoning that such a sin of pride as that of Iblīs is totally different from the ordinary sins of passion which are readily forgiven.[226] Not even the intercession of a mystic who has attained perfection is of any value; the sentence of Iblīs is irrevocable.

ʿAṭṭār tells of a particular occasion in Al-Bisṭāmī's life when he was caught up to God in mystic ecstasy. A voice from the Divine Presence asks what boon he is seeking. He answers that there is nothing at all he needs: "I desire You and nothing else." The voice insists, and Al-Bisṭāmī complies by requesting that God shower His mercy upon all creatures. God grants the wish far beyond Al-Bisṭāmī's expectation.

> Then I fell silent. After a while I said, 'Show mercy to Iblīs!' He replied, 'You have spoken arrogantly; be silent! For he is of fire, and a fiery being deserves something fiery hot. Take care that you do not bring yourself to this end. For you become deserving of fire when you are disobedient.'[227]

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[224] A clear exception must be made for ʿAṭṭār. The work that has been referred to thus far, the *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, reflects the opinions and positions of a wide variety of Sufi masters, the majority of whom agree with those who affirm that Iblīs' evil nature is the predominant force in his personality. ʿAṭṭār himself, however, in those works that reflect more his own particular theological perspective, offers an alternative position more in tune with the views of those Sufis who will be discussed in the following chapter.

[225] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 4, l. 3412-3415, p. 795.

[226] ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, p. 338.

[227] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

In the same way, it would be foolish to base any hope for the final repentance of Iblīs on the possible residual power of his pre-fall glory, or the merits gained through his former asceticism. Al-Makkī condemns this view as a Murji'a heresy. The Murji'ites claimed that as long as one believed and professed the faith on one occasion during one's life, there was hope of restoration, even if all one's remaining days were filled with horrendous deeds. While the Murji'ites would not hold for a guaranteed rehabilitation, they felt that judgement must at least be deferred, hence their name, Murji'ites, "the Postponers".[228]

It is Al-Junayd who delivers the *coup de grace* to any faint hope of final salvation for Iblīs. He denies that Iblīs ever attained to true contemplation, even at the peak of his obedience and renown as ascetic and ruler of the heavens. By contrast, Ādam experienced true contemplation, a contemplation that he did not lose even when he sinned.[229]

The insolvency of Iblīs and his bankruptcy reach back, therefore, to the earliest days of his worship, where one discovers that, what appeared to be gold, is actually the dross of the swindler from whom no profit can ever be gained.[230] To see Iblīs as he truly is, one must hark back to the oft-recurring lists of the evil characteristics of Iblīs, and the catalogue of the many nets he casts to entangle the unwary believer.[231]

> From an Iblīs separation came to be; to him ignominy is praise;
> to him injustice is fidelity; to him sickness is benevolence.[232]

No one is deleted from the roster of his victims, neither the weak nor innocent, neither the holy nor wise. Learn from Adam's plight; he had never antagonized Iblīs before their meeting, nor had he done him any injury from his home in Paradise. Yet he was Iblīs' first victim and, because of Adam, Iblīs swore enmity forever to the sons and daughters of man.[233]

It is impossible for these Sufi writers to opt for either the restoration of Iblīs through personal repentance, or his rehabilitation as a result of the merits acquired in his life as minister of the Divine Throne. Yet this does not mean that his name is never associated with expressions of hope or mercy. Surprisingly, this occurs in the work of Rūmī, one of the staunchest proponents of Iblīs' ultimate condemnation. In Rūmī's

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[228] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:272.

[229] This statement of Al-Junayd is reported by both Al-Kalābādhī and ʿAṭṭār. See Al-Kalābādhī, *Kitāb at-taʿarruf*, p. 131; ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'*, p. 437.

[230] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 2, l. 653-656, p. 231.

[231] See Ch. 1, pp. 39-40. The same is repeated in Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, vol. 3, book 21, p. 34. See also above, p. 114.

[232] Rūmī, *Kullīyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, pp. 929-930 #2501.

[233] See Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 2, l. 229, p. 211; Book 5, l. 2604-2611, p. 956.

discussion of the power of divine gifts, such as faith, mercy, prayer, love, and the like, important signs of hope for Iblīs are marked out.

The point, however, is not so much that Rūmī wishes actually to hold out any hope for Iblīs. Rather his aim is to dramatize the extraordinary power latent in divine gifts. These realities are so potent that they can be said to transform even an Iblīs. What is to be taken seriously is the power of the gifts, not so much the eventual transformation of Satan. In addition, Rūmī wishes to emphasize the complete gratuitousness of God's benevolence. He pours His love on whomever He pleases, be he good or evil, saint or devil.

> Iblīs does not despair of Your benevolence;
> every moment another ray of hope shines on him from You.[234]

Because of the fulness and perfection of God's mercy, Rūmī explains, a treasure can be made to appear among desert ruins.

> When the cypress of mercy waves proudly in the garden,
> Yes, Iblīs, the accursed one, discovers faith.[235]

One of God's greatest mercies is His gift of prophecy and the revelation of His Word. Rūmī points especially to Moses and his Israelite descendants as sources of transforming prophecy; they are holy men, chosen by God, whose words are capable of making an Iblīs once again an angel of the Cherubim.[236]

The most abundant transforming power of all, however, is reserved for the gift of mystic love, whose intoxicating wine frees the spirit from its mundane bonds and imbues it with the Divine Presence. Just one glance from the eye of the Beloved is able to transform an Adam into an unbeliever and an Iblīs into a pious Muslim.[237]

> He has made everyone drunk from His wine-filled glance,
> so that now from intoxication the stranger is mingled with the Friend.
> And from abundance of wine Iblīs has become Adam;
> the curse of Iblīs is mingled with election.[238]

These poems of Rūmī are not, however, meant to offer any real solace to Iblīs. Their aim is to encourage the initiate to give himself wholeheartedly to the Path and to the instruction of the *shaykh* who will guide him. Despite pain, discouragement, and the power of Iblīs, the

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[234] Rūmī, *Kullīyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, p. 409 #1028.
[235] *Ibid.*, pp. 1072-1073 #2896.
[236] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, Book 4, l. 2597-2604, pp. 754-755; Book 4, l. 3494-3496, p. 799.
[237] Rūmī, *Kullīyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, p. 329 #804.
[238] *Ibid.*, p. 883 #2371.

novice must not lose hope, nor dwell on his own personal weakness; rather he must keep his eyes focused on the face of the Beloved, whose power can transform human frailty into loving union, as He could, if He so willed, transform Iblīs into the greatest of saints.

> In this bloody battle you win every victory with your sword.
> And from the spoils you bring forth every Iblīs a Muslim.[239]

[239] *Ibid.*, p. 1285 #3447.

CHAPTER THREE

IBLĪS: MODEL OF THE MYSTIC MAN

A. *The Science of Opposites*

1. *Iblīs: preacher, monotheist, and martyr*

This inquiry thus far has taken us through many of the pertinent texts that contain elements for the construction of Iblīs' mythic biography. Qurʾān, *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *qiṣaṣ*, historical texts—each was shown to play a critical role in shaping the Iblīs legend. From this vantage point a more detailed inquiry was initiated into the development of the Iblīs motif within a specifically Sufi context. What can be pinpointed as the underlying element of unity at the heart of this second stage of the examination is the conviction, shared by all the Sufi practitioners whose works were cited, that Iblīs is clearly a negative force within the spiritual life.

This conviction, however, did not in any way limit the developmental scope of Iblīs both as mythic figure and religious symbol. On the contrary, the involvement of Iblīs in Sufi life ranged from sober discussions of religious psychology to highly charged, dramatic encounters which reflect Sufi preoccupations with thorny ascetical and theological issues, such as how one deals with God's *irāda* and *amr*.

Despite the subtle and complex variations manifested within the personality of Iblīs, the predominant motivation discovered at the core of his being was unabashed evil, albeit capable of clothing itself in an infinite variety of appealing forms. The final verdict rendered by the Sufis who perceived Iblīs in this light was "guilty beyond the shadow of a doubt." Moreover, in their estimation, there is no possible hope for his future rehabilitation; Iblīs is condemned to an eternity of torment in Hell.

In addition to the above strands of the Iblīs motif that were woven into the fabric of the Sufi tradition, a parallel strand has yet to be examined, one that can be traced back to the early periods of Sufism. The underlying presupposition of the Sufi theorists whose works illustrate this parallel development differs considerably from that encountered in the Sufi texts of Chapter 2. While the latter Sufis held that Iblīs had earned eternal damnation for himself because of his arrogant refusal to bow before Adam, the former propose a variety of hopeful avenues for the possible rehabilitation of Iblīs. Even though this belief in the possible redemption of Satan functions as a unifying substratum in the works of

those Sufis who will be the focus of Chapter 3, a broad diversity in approach, theme, and expression will become apparent as the discussion progresses.

The roots for this branch of the Iblīs motif can be found, as Professor Annemarie Schimmel has pointed out, in the writings of Ḥusayn Ibn Manṣūr Al-Ḥallāj,[1] especially the chapters *Ṭāsīn al-azal wa ʾl-iltibās* and *Ṭāsīn al-mashīʾa* of his work *Kitāb aṭ-ṭawāsīn*. The text of the *Kitāb aṭ-ṭawāsīn* is preserved both in the original Arabic (edited by Louis Massignon) and in Persian translation with extensive commentary by the renowned mystic of the 12th-13th centuries, Rūzbihān Al-Baqlī (most recently edited by Henry Corbin). The Persian text with commentary of Al-Baqlī is invaluable for extracting the meaning of a difficult and often obscure Arabic text; it also provides a fine example of a more sober Sufi's struggle to deal with Al-Ḥallāj's paradoxical and seemingly unorthodox attitude towards Iblīs.

One of the most striking pedagogical techniques employed by Al-Ḥallāj in his work is the juxtaposition of opposites; it jolts the reader's mind and forces him to ponder these antithetical spiritual realities anew. The first pair of opposites is made up of Iblīs and Muḥammad: "The only ones whose preaching was sound are Iblīs and Aḥmad—may God bless him and grant him peace!"[2] This sound preaching of Iblīs is itself described by Al-Ḥallāj as a combination of opposites; in the heavens Iblīs preached to the angels about obedience and the Path to God, while on earth he taught mankind the ways of Evil.[3] However, these opposite poles become complementary when viewed from the perspective of their ultimate purpose:

> Because things are known through their opposites, fine white silk is woven with a backing of coarse black wool. The angel can point out good deeds to someone and say to him as an abstract statement, 'If you perform these deeds you will be rewarded.' But he who does not know evil in the concrete, cannot know good.[4]

As pointed out before, Ibn Ghānim alludes to this Ḥallājian theme in the *Taflīs Iblīs*,[5] but in a substantially different context. In Ibn Ghānim's

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[1] Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 194.

[2] Ḥusayn Ibn Manṣūr Al-Ḥallāj, *Kitāb aṭ-ṭawāsīn*, ed. Louis Massignon (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1913), p. 41 #1. The Massignon edition also contains the Persian text of Al-Baqlī. However, in this essay the more recent Persian edition of Henry Corbin, which contains both the text and commentary of Al-Baqlī, will be used. See Rūzbihān Al-Baqlī Ash-Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ-i shaṭḥiyāt (Commentaire sur les paradoxes des soufis)*, ed. Henry Corbin (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1966), p. 509 #972.

[3] Al-Ḥallāj, *Ṭawāsīn*, p. 49 #18; Al-Baqlī, *Sharḥ*, p. 524 #1007.

[4] Al-Ḥallāj, *Ṭawāsīn*, p. 49 #19.

[5] See Ch. 2, pp. 106-107.

account, the tragic soliloquy of Iblīs cannot be separated from his belief in the essential corruption of the Iblīs nature; Al-Ḥallāj, on the other hand, sees both Iblīs and Muḥammad as pivotal characters in the unfolding of God's divine plan. They are both faithful instruments whose obedience is unswerving, despite the vicissitudes each must suffer.

> Iblīs was told, 'Bow!' and Aḥmad was told, 'Look!' But this fellow did not bow and Aḥmad did not look. He turned his face neither right nor left. 'His eye turned not aside nor did it wander from its orbit' (Qur'ān 53:17).[6]

This fidelity to God's will forever links Iblīs and Muḥammad in the eyes of Al-Ḥallāj. Neither strayed from his appointed course, although each reacted quite differently to encounters with God's *amr*. Iblīs fell back on the resources of his own majestic power and spiritual perfection acquired through aeons of obedient worship, while Muḥammad was overcome by the sense of his own creatureliness and God's overwhelming might.[7] Al-Ḥallāj does not ascribe moral significance to this difference between the reactions of Iblīs and Muḥammad; however, Al-Baqlī seizes on it as an opportunity to reiterate the oft-repeated condemnation of Iblīs based on his preoccupation with power. This preoccupation, Al-Baqlī insists, blinded Iblīs to the true nature of Adam and thereby nullified the value of his previous obedience and preaching.[8]

Nevertheless, Iblīs is singled out by Al-Ḥallāj for these two eminent qualities, preaching and single-minded obedience. He is also, in Al-Ḥallāj's estimation, spiritual model for all Muslims because he, more perfectly than any other created being, witnessed to the Unity and Oneness of God, even at the expense of self-destruction.

> There was no monotheist like Iblīs among the inhabitants of the heavens. When the essence revealed itself to him in stunning glory, he renounced even a glance at it and worshipped God in ascetic isolation.... God said to him, 'Bow!' He replied, 'To no other!' He said to him, 'Even if My curse be upon you?' He cried out, 'To no other!'
>
> My refusal is the cry, 'Holy are You!'
> my reason is madness, madness for You.
> What is Adam, other than You?
> and who is Iblīs to set apart one from the other?[9]

This daring proclamation of Iblīs as the perfect monotheist scandalized Al-Baqlī who was at a loss to find a sober interpretation for this apparent heresy of Al-Ḥallāj. Al-Baqlī was driven to attack Al-Ḥallāj's basic

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[6] Al-Ḥallāj, *Ṭawāsīn*, p. 41 #2. See also Al-Baqlī, *Sharḥ*, p. 509 #976.
[7] Al-Ḥallāj, *Ṭawāsīn*, p. 42 #3-5. See also Al-Baqlī, *Sharḥ*, pp. 509-510 #976.
[8] Al-Baqlī, *Sharḥ*, pp. 510-512 #977-979.
[9] Al-Ḥallāj, *Ṭawāsīn*, pp. 42-43 #6-7, 9-10. See also Al-Baqlī, *Sharḥ*, pp. 512-514 #980, 984, 986.

presupposition that Iblīs was faced with a real choice between worshipping God or an "other". There really was no "other" there, asserts Al-Baqlī; it was the veiled state of Iblīs that induced his double vision. Were he a true monotheist, he would have seen only God's glory and obeyed this command of the Almighty.

> He was unaware that Adam was God's creation, and God's creation mirrors Him. If you should look into the mirror, you would see Him clearly. Thus it has been said, 'I have gazed upon nothing without seeing God in it.'[10]

The paradoxical juxtaposition of opposites reaches a peak when Al-Ḥallāj turns not to Iblīs alone, but to both Iblīs and Pharaoh for models of the spiritual life. The virtue they share in common is *futūwa*, a term that comprises all of the noble and chivalrous qualities of the Muslim knight, especially fidelity and dedication to duty. Al-Ḥallāj tells of a discussion he had with both of these cosmic figures concerning this virtue of noble manliness:

> I debated with Iblīs and Pharaoh about manliness. And Iblīs said, 'If I bowed, I would have lost the title of manliness.' And Pharaoh said, 'If I had believed in His messenger, I would have fallen from the rank of manliness.' And I said, 'If I had gone back on my preaching and my sayings, I would have slipped from the carpet of manliness.'...
>
> My friend and my teacher are Iblīs and Pharaoh. Iblīs was threatened with the fire, but he did not go back on his preaching. And Pharaoh was drowned in the Red Sea, but he did not acknowledge any mediator at all.... And if I were killed, or crucified, or if my hands and feet were cut off, I would not go back on my preaching.[11]

Unwilling to accept these anti-heroes as spiritual guides, Al-Baqlī minimizes Al-Ḥallāj's assertions, and, in the process, illustrates again the schizophrenic attitude many less intoxicated Sufis take towards Al-Ḥallāj. On the one hand, Al-Baqlī expresses continued reverence and respect for the spiritual wisdom of Al-Ḥallāj; yet, at the same time, he is incapable of accepting the ecstatic and paradoxical essence of Al-Ḥallāj's doctrine. For it to be acceptable to Al-Baqlī, the Ḥallājian corpus must be neutralized by means of a commentary that envelops the paradoxical in logic, the shocking in sobriety, and the antinomian in the mantle of the law. In conformity with this *modus operandi*, Al-Baqlī takes the attribution of *futūwa* by Al-Ḥallāj to Iblīs and Pharaoh and reduces it to an acknowledgement by Al-Ḥallāj of their extraordinary, though misguided, courage.

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[10] Al-Baqlī, *Sharḥ*, pp. 513-515 #985, 987. The quotation is found on p. 515 #987.

[11] Al-Ḥallāj, *Ṭawāsīn*, pp. 49-52 #20, 21, 24, and 25. See also Al-Baqlī, *Sharḥ*, pp. 373-374 #673.

Al-Baqlī completely separates the abstract virtue of *futūwa* from the morality of the concrete acts of Iblīs and Pharaoh which he can only characterize as anti-religious. He states that any act of bravery is a laudable deed, even when performed by an unbeliever; as proof Al-Baqlī quotes the Sufi saying, "A generous fool is closer to God than a miserly wise man."[12]

Al-Baqlī points to Iblīs and Pharaoh's acts of perverted *futūwa* as proof of the fantasies that can be sparked by ecstatic religious experience. Before his fall Iblīs was lost in the sea of gnosis (*maʿrifa*), explains Al-Baqlī, and this very ecstasy spawned his prideful delusions.

> Because of God he became deluded about God. The sea of Oneness (*tawḥīd*) flung him on the shore of isolation.... Ignorance deceived him into abandoning intermediaries (i.e. Adam). He cried out, 'It is associationism to acknowledge intermediaries in the ascetic isolation of Oneness!'[13]

In the mind of Al-Baqlī, Iblīs' experience was not true *tawḥīd* but the direct result of the sin of "I".[14] An identical case, Al-Baqlī insists, is Al-Ḥallāj's own "*Ana ʾl-Ḥaqq*!" ("I am the Divine Truth!"). His ecstasy blinded him to the differentiation between himself and God, and he saw only "I". This, however, cannot be interpreted as an expression of metaphysical identity; it is, on the contrary, analogous to God's breathing into Adam at creation, which did not transform Adam into an incarnation of the divine, but did allow him to shine forth the Spirit of God. "*Ana ʾl-Ḥaqq*!" is, therefore, only an ecstatic witness to the fact that Al-Ḥallāj, like every created being, reflects the *vestigia Dei*, traces of the divine, creative Spirit.[15]

Al-Baqlī's commentary continually refuses to deal candidly with the paradoxical kernel at the heart of the teachings of Al-Ḥallāj. In the *Ṭawāsīn* no moral blame is ascribed to Iblīs, as Al-Baqlī would prefer. Nor is Iblīs depicted as the blackhearted deceiver who manipulates his tragic situation in order to ingratiate himself with mankind. Iblīs, as portrayed in the *Ṭawāsīn*, is a tragic, martyr figure, who, despite his dedicated preaching, perfect monotheism, and eternal loyalty, suffers destruction at the hands of the God whom he lovingly worships.

> He was told, 'Do you not bow, O despicable creature?' He replied, 'You say "despicable creature" but I read in a book of evident truths what will come to pass for me, O Powerful, Steadfast One!' How could I humble myself before him? You created me from fire and You created him from clay; they are opposites that will never accord. I am older in service, more

[12] Al-Baqlī, *Sharḥ*, pp. 375-376 #676.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 376 #677.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 377 #679.
[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 377-379 #681-682.

> advanced in virtue, more skilled in knowledge, and more perfect in the way I lead my life.' God said to him, 'The choice is Mine, not yours.' He replied, 'All choices, mine included, belong to You! You have already chosen for me, O Creator. If You have prevented my bowing to him, You are Preventer. If I have sinned in speech, You do not forsake me, for You are the All-Hearing. If You willed that I bow to him, I would have been the obedient one. I know of no one among the gnostics who knows You better than me!'[16]

Iblīs is a martyr to the transcendent God whose designs cannot be encompassed by the created spirit. Al-Ḥallāj describes this unfathomable realm as a series of four circles: the first is the circle of God's will; the second, His wisdom; the third, His omnipotence; the fourth, His pre-eternal knowledge. It is impossible for Iblīs to pass through these circles unscathed. Were he to escape the first, he would be put to the test in the second; were he to struggle past the second, the third would await him, and so on through all the circles that make up God's foreordained plan.[17]

> If I had learned that bowing would save me, I would have bowed. But I learned that beyond that circle lay the other circles. And I said to myself, 'Granting I am saved from this circle, how will I be delivered from the second? the third? the fourth?'[18]

Al-Baqlī refers in his commentary to an alleged further amplification by Al-Ḥallāj of Iblīs' wrestling with these circles of divine power:

> From the science of will, wisdom, omnipotence, and knowledge I learned that my recompense was that I be driven away. Whether I bow or not, I have taken hold of God's intention. On the tablet of God's will I had read, 'Iblīs is an unbeliever.' On the page of wisdom I had read, 'Iblīs is accursed.' On the scroll of omnipotence I had read, 'Iblīs is banished.' And in the mother of books I had read, 'Iblīs is veiled.' If from the first circle I find escape, I will be put to the test in a similar way in the other circles: 'For He is the All-Powerful over His servants.' Bowing profits not; 'the pen has dried up concerning what He will create, forever.'[19]

It would be easy to assume from Al-Ḥallāj's enormous emphasis on the determinative power of God's will that Iblīs is simply a puppet manipulated according to the changing patterns of the divine plan. This perspective overlooks his interest throughout the *Ṭawāsīn* in the interior states of Iblīs, especially his emotional turmoil when faced with the conflict between God's will and His command. Iblīs is no empty, emotionless product of determinism. The most significant sign of the true

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[16] Al-Ḥallāj, *Ṭawāsīn*, pp. 52-53 #27-28. See also Ch. 2, p. 107 for Ibn Ghānim's borrowing of the Ḥallājian theme.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 56 #1-2. See also Al-Baqlī, *Sharḥ*, p. 527 #1013.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 57 #4. See also Al-Baqlī, *Sharḥ*, pp. 527-528 #1013.

[19] Al-Baqlī, *Sharḥ*, p. 528 #1014.

reciprocity of the relationship between Iblīs and God is the conviction expressed by Al-Ḥallāj that the motivating force behind Iblīs' choices, especially his refusal to bow, is not coercion, but the depth of his mystic contemplation of the Beloved: "The angels bowed to Adam as a gesture of support. Iblīs refused to bow because of the long duration of his contemplation."[20] The essence of contemplation is the free gift of self in love, a mutual self-donation; such an experience cannot come about through compulsion.

Al-Baqlī refused to accept the words of Al-Ḥallāj at their face value; he felt obliged to mitigate their impact by reducing Iblīs' experience of God to a vision of the kingdom of heaven apart from God. If he had truly contemplated the divine realm, God would not have called him *kāfir* (unbeliever), adds Al-Baqlī, who, again, shows himself unprepared to cope with Al-Ḥallāj's paradoxical juxtaposition of condemnation and moral uprightness in the person of Iblīs. In Al-Baqlī's mind, it is Adam, not Iblīs, who experienced contemplation and attained unique preeminence because of the spirit that God breathed into him.[21]

In corroboration of this stance Al-Baqlī quotes Abū Bakr Al-Wāsiṭī who teaches that one must not put great stock in protestations of faithful obedience, for there have been obedient Sufis whose obedience was nothing more than rote imitation, devoid of gnosis. viz., Iblīs.[22] For-

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[20] Al-Ḥallāj, *Ṭawāsīn*, p. 55 #35. See also Al-Baqlī, *Sharḥ*, p. 525 #1009.

This candid testimony by Al-Ḥallāj to the contemplation of Iblīs is the focus of an important textual disagreement. In the Arabic text of Massignon these lines form the dramatic conclusion to the chapter *Ṭāsīn al-azal wa 'l-iltibās*. However, in the Persian text of Al-Baqlī that Massignon includes with the Arabic edition, several additional lines appear (supposedly part of Al-Baqlī's translation of the *Ṭawāsīn* text) that denigrate the obedience of Iblīs, condemn his refusal to bow, and attribute his veiled state to the sin of "I" (*Ṭawāsīn*, p. 55 #36). When juxtaposed with the above testimonial to Iblīs' contemplation, these lines tend to nullify the testimonial's impact by interpreting the claim to contemplation as a lie.

In his French translation of the *Ṭawāsīn*, which appears in his monumental work on Al-Ḥallāj (*La passion de Ḥusayn Ibn Manṣūr Ḥallāj*, 4 vols. new edition [Paris: Gallimard, 1975]), Massignon includes these added lines as part of the *Ṭawāsīn* text (see *Passion*, 3:333). The same inclusion is made in the recent English translation of the *Ṭawāsīn* which clearly is based on the earlier work of Massignon (*The Ṭawāsīn of Manṣūr Al-Ḥallāj*, tr. Aisha Abd Ar-Rahman At-Tarjumana [Berkeley: Diwan Press, 1974], p. 49).

However, in the most recent edition of the Persian text by Henry Corbin (subsequent to the edition of Massignon) these lines are not included in the actual text of the *Ṭawāsīn* but rather are to be found in the commentary of Al-Baqlī where they make far more logical sense, and are an integral part of Al-Baqlī's discussion of the contrast he perceives between Iblīs and Adam (see *Sharḥ*, p. 527 #1011). It therefore seems appropriate to rely on the Arabic edition of Massignon and the Persian edition of Corbin, but not on the Persian edition of Massignon or on the French and English translations of the *Ṭawāsīn*, for an accurate picture of the construction of the text at this critical point.

[21] Al-Baqlī, *Sharḥ*, pp. 525-527 #1010-1011.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 300 #534.

tunately Al-Baqlī's commentary does not succeed in dimming the brilliance of Al-Ḥallāj's mystical vision of Iblīs. On the contrary, the Iblīs of the *Ṭawāsīn* stands forth as a testimony to the inherent power of mystic contemplation to carry the soul beyond the paradoxes and logical contradictions that permeate the mundane experience of materiality and individuality to an experience of annihilation in the Beloved.

> He (Iblīs) fell into the ocean of omnipotence and became blind. He cried, 'My path leads to no one except You, for I am a humble lover.' He replied to him, 'You have boasted!' He answered, 'If there were but one glance between us, it would be right for me to boast about it and be puffed up. I am he who has known You in all eternity. I am better than he, because for ages past I have been in Your service. There is no one in the two worlds more knowledgeable about You than me. I directed my will towards You and You directed Your will towards me, and both were prior (to the creation of Adam). Whether I bow to another or do not bow, it is inevitable that I return to my origin. You created me from fire, and fire returns to fire. To You belong the decree and the free choice.
>
> I no longer experience a sense of distance after being distanced from You,
> since I have realized for certain that nearness and distance are one.
> As for me, even if I am abandoned, then abandonment becomes my companion;
> how right it is that abandonment and love are one!
> May You be praised! in Your providence and Your pure essence,
> for the sake of a guiltless worshipper who bows to no one but You.'[23]

2. *Iblīs and Moses on Mount Sinai*

One central passage of the *Ṭāsīn al-azal wa ʾl-iltibās* yet to be discussed represents Al-Ḥallāj's use of mythic fable to dramatize the personality of Iblīs. This particular tale recounts a meeting between Iblīs and Moses on Mount Sinai. Ibn Ghānim, too, incorporates much of this same passage into his own work,[24] however Al-Ḥallāj and Ibn Ghānim differ profoundly in their intentions. Ibn Ghānim aims to describe the wiles and deceptions of a tragic, cosmic figure whose internal corruption brought about his eternal damnation. Al-Ḥallāj means to highlight the paradoxical truth that condemnation and degradation can be the emblems of triumph for the mystic who is totally caught up in the contemplation of the Beloved.

Whereas the basic plot remains the same in both versions of the fable, the divergent theological concerns of each author make themselves felt throughout. The story begins in identical fashion in both texts with Moses encountering Iblīs after he, Moses, has spoken with God on

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[23] Al-Ḥallāj, *Ṭawāsīn*, pp. 43-45 #11-12. See also Al-Baqlī, *Sharḥ*, pp. 515-516 #988-990, pp. 517-518 #992-993.

[24] See Ch. 2, pp. 107-108.

Mount Sinai. Moses questions Iblīs about his refusal to bow to Adam; Iblīs answers that it was his single-minded dedication to monotheism that would not allow him to look on another than God. Iblīs, in fact, chides Moses for permitting himself to be enticed to gaze upon the mountain instead of focusing his attention on God alone.[25] Al-Ḥallāj continues:

> Moses said to him, 'You abandoned the command of God!' He replied, 'That was a test, not a command.' He said, 'But surely your form has been radically altered.' He answered, 'O Moses, that, well, that is but deception. This state is not at all reliable because it changes; but the gnosis is as sound as it was before, even if the outward person has changed.'
>
> Moses asked him, 'Do you remember Him even now?' He replied, 'O Moses!
>
> His remembrance is my remembrance, and my remembrance is His remembrance;
>
> can it be that those who are remembering be anything but united together?'
>
> 'My service now is purer, my moments freer, and my *dhikr* clearer. For I used to serve Him for the sake of my own prosperity; now I serve Him for His.'
>
> 'We have eliminated the desire for self-interest from acts of prohibition and repudiation, loss and gain. He has separated me, filled me with longing, bewildered me, and driven me away lest I mingle with the faithful ones. He refused me access to others because of my jealous ardor. He deformed me because of my bewilderment; He bewildered me because of my exile; He exiled me because of my service; He made me a pariah because of my companionship; He reviled me because of my praise.... He separated me because of my unveiling of Him; He unveiled me because of my attainment of union. He brought me to union because of my being cut off; He cut me off to frustrate the object of my desire.'
>
> 'By His Truth!' I did not sin against His design; I did not reject His plan. I did not pay attention to the mutilation of my form, for throughout these fateful events, I am able to cope. If He should torment me with His fire for eternities on end, I would not bow to anyone. Nor would I grovel before any person or physical body, for I know of no adversary to Him, nor any child begotten of Him. My preaching is the preaching of truthful men, and I am a sincere lover.'[26]

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[25] Al-Ḥallāj, *Ṭawāsīn*, pp. 45-46 #13. See also Al-Baqlī, *Sharḥ*, p. 518 #994. The Qur'ānic verse alluded to here by Iblīs is Qur'ān 7:143:

> And when Moses came to the time We appointed and his Lord spoke with him, he said, 'Lord, show me, that I may look upon You!' He replied, 'You will not see Me, but look at the mountain! If it stands firm in its place, you will see Me.' When God revealed His glory to the mountain, He turned it into dust; and Moses fell unconscious. When he revived, he cried out, 'Glory to You! I have repented, and I am the first of the believers!'

[26] Al-Ḥallāj, *Ṭawāsīn*, pp. 46-49 #14-17. See also Al-Baqlī, *Sharḥ*, pp. 518-520 #994-995.

In the context of the *Ṭawāsīn*, this passage leaves no doubt about the difference between Ibn Ghānim and Al-Ḥallāj, especially as regards each's judgement on the authenticity of the interior states of Iblīs. Ibn Ghānim is not alone, however, in interpreting this soliloquy of Iblīs as a sham, a subtle and skillfully executed seduction of Moses by Iblīs. Al-Baqlī, in his commentary on this fable, alludes to the time-honored Sufi insight that Iblīs has the power to appear in ecstatic visions in order to fill pious men with doubts about the authenticity of their spiritual states. This was already singled out as one of Iblīs' most potent spiritual weapons.[27] Al-Baqlī presents as additional proof a tale of Iblīs and Moses on Mount Sinai, similar to the one in Al-Ḥallāj's *Ṭawāsīn*, where Iblīs shamelessly spins a web of confusion in which to ensnare Moses:

> Iblīs said to Moses, 'Where are you coming from?' He replied, 'From my prayers to God.' He said, 'Did you consider that those words you heard might be mine?' Moses became very upset and angry. God Most High called to him, 'O Moses, drive this accursed one from your presence! For this is his accustomed ploy with the faithful.'[28]

No one, Al-Baqlī warns, should presume that he is immune from this illusion created by Iblīs. Not only Moses, but Jesus, too, was accosted by Iblīs on a mountain road, ostensibly so that Iblīs could acknowledge and praise the extraordinary level of spiritual development that Jesus had attained: "O Jesus, your endeavor has achieved such preeminence that you are now god of the earth and He the god of the heavens!" Jesus disclaims any divine status and reaffirms his role as humble servant of God. Yet Iblīs does not abandon his purpose and vows to repeat his temptation of Jesus. One after the other, God sends his chief angels, Gabriel and Michael, to seize and bind Iblīs, and carry him off to the realm of the sun. But, undaunted, Iblīs devises his escape and returns to waylay Jesus once again upon the mountain road:

> He shouted, 'O Jesus, you are the creator of the earth, and He is god of the heavens!' Jesus became frightened and cried out, saying, 'I am His servant, and by means of these signs He shows Himself to be the All-Holy, the Provident One.' Thereupon both Isrāfīl and ʿAzrāʾīl came and seized the accursed one; in the same way three hundred thousand angels came as reinforcements. They bound him in the pit of the West where they imprisoned him; there they kept guard until Jesus had finished his prayers.

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[27] See Ch. 2, pp. 79-80 and especially note 105.

This belief in the power of Iblīs to appear in pseudo-mystic trance is found in the writings of Sufi masters two hundred years before Al-Baqlī (As-Sarrāj, Ibn Al-Khafīf) and is still in evidence more than two hundred years later in the work of Jāmī. See ʿAbd Ar-Raḥmān Ibn Aḥmad Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, ed. Mahdī Tawḥīdīpūr (Tehrān: Kitābfurūshī-yi Maḥmūdī, 1337 A.H. solar), pp. 245-246.

[28] Al-Baqlī, *Sharḥ*, p. 520 #996.

> After some days, he (Iblīs) saw him again and said, 'O Jesus! if they had not imprisoned me in the pit of the West, and had not bound me fast, and had not stationed three hundred thousand angels as guards, I would have done with you what I did with your father Adam!'[29]

Al-Baqlī is undoubtedly convinced that Moses' vision of Iblīs described in the fable of Al-Ḥallāj is similar in worth to that experienced by Moses and Jesus in the two subsequent mythic tales that he relates. Moreover, it is Al-Baqlī's firm belief, expressed here and elsewhere, that no good can come from such a vision, for it contains no truth except the truth of the frightening power possessed by Iblīs, the father of lies and master of religious deception.[30]

If Iblīs had seen Adam as the mirror of God, in the way that Moses perceived the miracle of the mountain, Iblīs would have bowed without question, choosing God's intention over his own, as Moses did.[31] But no, he invented the fallacious distinction between God's *amr* and His *irāda*, alleging that God's command was only a test.[32] Not even Iblīs' obvious deformation into a satanic being persuaded him to acknowledge his sin; it only stimulated him to invent a more fantastic lie, the claim that his gnosis was sound despite his ghoulish exterior.

One need only look to the case of the blessed Joseph, insists Al-Baqlī, to see what actually happens to one who is imbued with the contemplative experience of God, for the gnosis of Joseph transformed his exterior as well as his interior.[33] In short, the curse of Iblīs is a true curse; he is a true *kāfir* who strives to associate himself with God by claiming that he can somehow promote God's good fortune. Iblīs is veiled, arrogant, and isolated from the Divine Presence for all eternity.[34]

While Al-Baqlī's exegesis of the mythic fable of Iblīs and Moses on Mount Sinai is an eloquent reiteration of the particular strand of the Iblīs tradition that views him in a negative light, it is not an exegesis substantiated by all other occurrences in the Sufi tradition of this tale. Ibn Al-Jawzī preserves another version of the Iblīs-Moses myth in his *Kitāb al-quṣṣāṣ wa ʾl-mudhakkirīn* where he attributes the use of the fable to Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī, the brother of the renowned mystic-theologian Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī.[35] The story, as recounted by Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī by way of

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[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 520-521 #997.

[30] Rūzbihān Al-Baqlī Ash-Shīrāzī, *Kitāb mashrab al-arwāḥ* (Istānbūl: Maṭbaᶜa kullīyat al-ādāb, 1973 C.E.), pp. 274, 304.

[31] Al-Baqlī, *Sharḥ*, pp. 521-522 #998. See also Qurʾān 7:143 (above).

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 522 #999.

[33] *Ibid.*, pp. 522-523 #1000.

[34] *Ibid.*, pp. 523-524 #1001-1006.

[35] However Ibn Al-Jawzī does not recount this myth to laud the spiritual insight of Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī whom he considers 'one of God's marvels in lying.' In fact a bit

Ibn Al-Jawzī, begins in the same way as in the *Ṭawāsīn* of Al-Ḥallāj: Moses encounters Iblīs on the mountain road of Sinai and questions him about the reasons for his refusal to bow before Adam.

> 'Never! I would never bow to a man. O Moses, you proclaimed God's unity, but I am the true monotheist who has never paid attention to another than Him. You said (to God), "Show me!" but you looked toward the mountain. I am more faithful than you in monotheism; He said to me, "Bow to another!" I did not bow, but you turned to look.' (Al-Ghazālī said, 'Whoever does not learn monotheism from Iblīs, he is a dualist [*zindīq*].') And Moses said to him, 'Your outward form has changed from that of the angels to that of the satans.' He replied, 'That state changes and will continue to change. O Moses, every time He increases His love for someone other than me, I increase in my love for Him.' He (Moses) asked him, 'Do you remember Him still?' He replied, 'I am the remembered one whom He has remembered: "For upon you is My curse!" Has He not joined "My" and "you" together in this expression of curse?'
>
> And he (Al-Ghazālī) said, 'When Iblīs was driven away, he did not diminish his service, nor his love, not his *dhikr* in the least way.'[36]

Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī's use of this mythic fable is very much in the Ḥallājian mode; Iblīs is described as the most assiduous of monotheists whose loving devotion cannot be diminished, even by deformation and damnation. No hint appears at all of moral culpability that would support Al-Baqlī's later exegesis of the fable.

One additional example of the Moses-Iblīs tale occurs in the work of the renowned Persian Sufi, Farīd Ad-Dīn ʿAṭṭār who was a contemporary of Al-Baqlī. His poetic version of the fable differs from that of Al-Ḥallāj and Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī because it stresses the power of God's decree more than Iblīs' proclamation of the purity of his monotheism.

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further on in the text, Ibn Al-Jawzī quotes Muḥammad Ibn Ẓāhir Al-Maqdisī's condemnation of the excesses of Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī:

> I (Muḥammad Ibn Ẓāhir Al-Maqdisī) heard him one day in Hamadhān say, 'I (Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī) saw Iblīs inside this monastery. He bowed to me, and I said, "Woe to you!" for God Most High had ordered him to bow to Adam and he refused.' And he (Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī) added, 'And by God, he bowed to me more than seventy times!' And so I realized that he would not return to his religion or the articles of faith. He also used to claim that he had visions of the prophet while he (Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī) was awake and not in his sleep. And he used to mention in his preaching that whenever something was problematic for him, he had a vision of the messenger of God, and he would ask him about the problem.'

See Abū ʾl-Faraj ʿAbd Ar-Raḥmān Ibn Al-Jawzī Al-Qurayshī Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-quṣṣāṣ wa ʾl-mudhakkirīn*, ed. and tr. Merlin S. Swartz (Beirut: Dār el-machreq, 1971), pp. 105 l. 19-106 l. 7 of the Arabic text.

[36] Ibn Al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-quṣṣāṣ wa ʾl-mudhakkirīn*, p. 104 l. 3-14 of the Arabic text. This passage is also quoted by Louis Massignon in *Recueil de textes inédits concernant l'histoire de la mystique en pays d'Islam* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1929), p. 96.

However, the outcome is the same, an increase in love and devotion by Iblīs notwithstanding the tragedy of his fate.

Again Moses is found upon Sinai's road; from a distance he espies the arrival of Iblīs whom he proceeds to interrogate about the reasons for his refusal to bow before Adam.

> The accursed one replied, 'O you who are accepted in the Divine Presence!
> I was driven away by the Almighty without reason.
> If there had been a way for me to perform that bow,
> I would be His intimate now, like you.
> But since God Most High has willed thus,
> what could I do to make things different for myself?'
> The intimate of God said to him, 'O you who have fallen into servitude,
> do you ever remember God?'
> The accursed one answered, 'Since I am overcome with loving affection,
> not for a moment do I ever forget Him.
> For in the same way that I bear no rancor towards Him,
> His love never leaves my heart.'
> Although he is distanced from the threshold because of his curse,
> nevertheless, according to this tale of Moses, he (Iblīs) is in the Divine Presence.
> Although the curse engulfed his heart with fire,
> because of that curse, his burning ardor increased.[37]

From these few examples it is apparent that the Iblīs-Moses myth is expressive of the versatility inherent in mythic forms, for it is part of the very nature of the mythic literary mode that it be an artistic medium malleable enough to take on the contours intended by the artist. The instances in which this particular myth occurs are indicative of at least two very distinct strands of the Iblīs tradition: the more sober view, which bases its interpretation on the principle that all visions of Iblīs are the products of his power of deception, in spite of the emotional quality of his words and the tragedy of his separation; the more intoxicated view, which discovers in the complex, tragic personality of Iblīs the exemplar of loving self-sacrifice and the model for the life of mystic love.

3. *Iblīs: chamberlain of illa ʾllāh, black light of divine power, and curl on the cheek of the Beloved*

The science of opposites, which plays such a central role in Al-Ḥallāj's vision of Iblīs, undergoes amplification and refinement at the hands of another Sufi martyr, Abū ʾl-Maʿālī ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Muḥammad ʿAlī Ibn Al-Ḥasan Ibn ʿAlī Al-Mayānajī Al-Hamadhānī, known more commonly

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[37] Farīd Ad-Dīn ʿAṭṭār Nayshābūrī, *Ilāhīnāma* ed. Hellmut Ritter (Istānbūl: Maṭbaʿa maʿārif, 1940), p. 138 l. 3-11.

as ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, who was put to death at Hamadhān in the year 525 A.H./1131 C.E. At the heart of ʿAin Al-Quḍāt's perception of Iblīs and his role in the spiritual life lies a paradox. It is the insight that God's condemnation and distancing of Iblīs because of his refusal to bow have earned Iblīs cosmic stature and proximity to the Divine Presence. The images employed by ʿAin Al-Quḍāt to express this paradoxical intimacy of cosmic opposites—God and Satan—are unique and multifaceted. While the spirit of his Sufi theologizing owes much to Al-Ḥallāj, the richness and vitality of the religious and literary expression are due to his own particular genius.

ʿAin Al-Quḍāt pinpoints the tension of cosmic opposites within the Muslim profession of faith itself, the *lā ilāh illa ʾllāh* (There is no god but God!). The realm of *lā ilāh* (There is no god) is the realm of falsehood and negation, the realm of all that seduces the soul of the mystic away from God. Truth and security are discovered only within the circle of *illa ʾllāh* (but God!), after *lā ilāh* has been traversed and left behind once and for all.[38]

> *Lā* is the circle of negation. One must place his first step within this circle, but he should not stop here nor dwell here. For if the traveller halts at this station or finds tranquility here, he becomes an associationist, a wearer of the *zunnār*. O what a tale there is about *lā ilāh*! You find that every hundred thousand travelling seekers of *illa ʾllāh* have set foot in the circle of the *lā* of negation, in their ardent desire for the jewel of *illa ʾllāh*. But if they take as their goal the inferior desert of God, the guardian of the Divine Presence of *illa ʾllāh* confounds and perplexes them.[39]

Who is this guardian and chamberlain of the Divine Presence of *illa ʾllāh*? None other than Iblīs.[40] He has earned this position of honor because of his unfailing obedience to God and his jealous protection of the experience of intimacy with the Beloved. In addition, he is, as ʿAin Al-Quḍāt describes, the best qualified and most adept at testing mankind in order to separate those truly worthy of access to the Divine Presence from those whose dedication and fidelity are but superficial and easily snatched away. These latter souls find themselves trapped within the circle of *lā* where they continue to worship their *nafs* and carnal desires rather than God.[41]

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[38] Abū ʾl-Maʿālī ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Muḥammad ʿAlī Ibn Al-Ḥasan Ibn ʿAlī Al-Mayānajī Al-Hamadhānī (ʿAin Al-Quḍāt), *Tamhīdāt*, ed. ʿAfīf Osseirān (Tehrān: Chāpkhāna-yi dānishgāh, 1341 A.H. solar), p. 73 #101.

[39] ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, p. 74 #102.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 30 #43, p. 74 #103. See also Abū ʾl-Maʿālī ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Muḥammad ʿAlī Ibn Al-Ḥasan Ibn ʿAlī Al-Mayānajī Al-Hamadhānī (ʿAin Al-Quḍāt), *Nāmahā-yi ʿAin Al-Quḍāt Hamadhānī*, 2 vols., ed. ʿAlīnaqī Munzavī and ʿAfīf Osseirān (Tehrān: Intishārāt-i bunyād-i farhang-i Irān, 1969-71 C.E.), 1:304 #509.

[41] ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, pp. 74-75 #103.

Without Iblīs' permission, therefore, no one can attain to God. Moreover God has definite need for Iblīs in this role of doorkeeper, for, if the king had no chamberlain, everyone, indiscriminately, would have access to the royal presence regardless of individual merit. Of what value would intimacy with the lord be if it were open to the profligate as well as the tested lover?[42]

By distinguishing between the pretenders and the sincere, Iblīs is performing the essential function of preserving the Divine Presence from desecration while at the same time acting as a principal agent in the unfolding of God's plan for mankind. In this role as agent of the divine will, Iblīs is linked by ʿAin Al-Quḍāt with Muḥammad because both are the chief preachers on the Path of God, the difference being that Muḥammad's preaching invites men and women to submit to the divine will while Iblīs draws mankind away from God.[43] However, Iblīs, like Muḥammad, is but an obedient instrument in the hands of the Almighty.

> Iblīs was retained to watch over the door to the presence of the Almighty and was told, 'You are My lover. Be jealous about My threshold and keep strangers out of My presence. And continue to proclaim this:
>
> ''The Beloved said to me, 'Sit at My door,
> do not allow inside anyone who is not in accord with Me.
> To him who desires Me, say, ''Be enraptured!''
> This state is not suitable for any man unless I find it suitable.' '' '[44]

ʿAin Al-Quḍāt employs the imagery of light to express more dramatically both the intimate relationship between Iblīs and Muḥammad and the radical tension between them. Whereas the light of Muḥammad is the blinding brightness of the sun of Truth and the pure light of gnosis which springs from the eternal East, Iblīs is the black light of the moon which springs from the eternal West.[45] The image of black light is also closely entwined with Iblīs' role as chamberlain of the Divine Presence; the Divine Presence is the actual source of Divine Light, and it

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[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 342-343 #454.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 228 #296. See also *Nāmahā*, 1:304 #509.

[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 228-229 #296.

[45] *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127 #175. In ʿAfīf Osseirān's edition of this passage of the *Tamhīdāt*, he describes the black light as the essence of the angel ʿAzrāʾīl rather than ʿAzāzīl, i.e., Iblīs. However it is clear from his notes that the manuscript tradition is by no means unanimous on this point, for ʿAzāzīl appears in the place of ʿAzrāʾīl in two instances. Considering the frequent reference by ʿAin Al-Quḍāt to Iblīs as the black light, it appears more logical in this particular case to opt for the variant, ʿAzāzīl.

For other references to Iblīs as the black light, see *Tamhīdāt*, pp. 48-49 #67, pp. 118-119 #166, pp. 119-120 #167, p. 122 #170, pp. 269-270 #353. The poetic allusion to Iblīs as black light that occurs on p. 119 #166 is also found in the *Sawāniḥ* of Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī. See Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī, *Sawāniḥ (Aphorismen über Die Liebe)*, ed. Hellmut Ritter (Istānbūl: Staatsdruckerei, 1942), p. 37 #19.

can only be attained by passing through its opposite, the black light of Iblīs.[46]

The light of Iblīs became black because God cursed him and bestowed the title of *kāfir*, unbeliever, upon him for all eternity. Yet this curse is paradoxically described as the chamberlain's robe of honor, for it is the insignia of Iblīs' perfect obedience and his willing embrace of the role of divine instrument. Likewise the sword of this black light who reigns over the domain of *lā* and jealously guards *illa ʾllāh* from intruders, is the sword of God's own divine power: "By Your power, I will surely seduce them all!" (Qurʾān 38:82).[47]

ʿAin Al-Quḍāt takes pains to emphasize that both Muḥammad and Iblīs spring from God and reflect concrete attributes of the Divine, viz., mercy and anger. Only in the unknowable essence of the Absolute is the tension between these two opposites resolved; on the experiential plane of lived reality these attributes are in conflict, although they do depend upon each other in one important respect: it is only through the one that the other can be known or experienced.

> But have you never realized that God has two names? One is 'The Compassionate, The Merciful' and the other is 'The Omnipotent, The Imperious'. From the attribute of overpowering might He brought Iblīs into being, and from the attribute of mercy, Muḥammad. Thereupon the attribute of mercy became Aḥmad's food, and the attribute of might and anger, the food of Iblīs.[48]

Elsewhere ʿAin Al-Quḍāt posits that the creation of both Iblīs and Muḥammad derives from one and the same divine attribute, God's almighty power. Muḥammad is the product of the light of God's power, while Iblīs springs from its fire. One need not take his word alone on this matter, ʿAin Al-Quḍāt explains, because it is on the testimony of Muḥammad that he relates this tradition. As further confirmation of his position, ʿAin Al-Quḍāt calls upon Sahl At-Tustarī and Shaybān Ar-Rāʿī, who ultimately derive their opinions from an encounter with the mysterious, mystical figure, Khiḍr. Their words corroborate the fact that Muḥammad's light is formed, nurtured, and lovingly cherished by the Almighty Himself.[49]

Finally Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī joins his voice to the chorus:

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[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 118-119 #166.

[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120 #167.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 227 #294. See also p. 270 #353:

> That black light comes from the mine of might and anger;
> it is the wellspring of unbelief and the abode of Satan.

[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 267-268 #351.

> Truly the light of Iblīs springs from the fire of almighty power, according to the saying of the Most High, 'You (God) created me (Iblīs) from fire!' If he (Iblīs) manifested his light to creatures, he would surely be worshipped as a god.[50]

It is this participation in the divine light that enables Iblīs so successfully to entice the faithful into substituting him and the circle of *lā* for the fulness of the light of *illa ʾllāh*.

The essences of both Muḥammad and Iblīs are, therefore, grounded in the divine essence, even though they express two conflicting and opposite poles of spiritual reality. This should not be seen as a contradiction, ʿAin Al-Quḍāt cautions, for just as water is the cause of life and growth for fish, and the cause of death for other beings, so the light of God is the catalyst for enlightenment and truth in the essence of Muḥammad and the catalyst for darkness and straying in Iblīs. Both are responses to the creative will of God, and neither Iblīs nor Muḥammad can claim for himself the power to lead aright or the power to lead astray, because both salvation and condemnation are brought to completion through the power of God's will.[51]

The analogy on the cosmological plane to the lights of Muḥammad and Iblīs is found in the lights of the sun and the moon. These two celestial bodies are the products of God's handiwork; however, each shines forth a different light. Sunlight reflects the brightness of God's beauty while moonlight glows with the light of God's power. In the same way that the essences of Iblīs and Muḥammad reflect the power and beauty of God, symbolized by the light of moon and sun, so, too, do the souls of men and women take on the characteristics of one or the other light, depending on each's response to the Word of God in the Qurʾān. The spirit of the unbeliever burns with the light of God's might and cries out at the rising of the moon, "This is my Lord!" The soul of the man of truth, however, recognizes as Lord only the sun of the light of Aḥmad which floods him with the luminous beauty of The Compassionate and Merciful.[52]

As a final symbol, ʿAin Al-Quḍāt employs the lock of hair that hangs in an arrogant curl over the face and cheek of the Beloved to describe the juxtaposition of Iblīs with God. These tresses enjoy a privileged state of intimacy with the Beloved since they are allowed to caress her cheek.

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[50] *Ibid.*, p. 211 #270.

This is consonant with the strain of the Iblīs tradition transmitted by As-Sarrāj, Ibn Al-Khafīf, Al-Baqlī, and Jāmī that describes the appearance of Iblīs in blinding light upon a throne of glory, in order to make the Sufi believe he has experienced the vision of God. See above, p. 131 and note 27.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 186 #244.

[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 212-213 #272. See also Qurʾān 6:75-79.

Because of the rapture of this union, the curl pridefully scorns all who would seek to duplicate her unique relationship with the Beloved.

> People have heard the name of Iblīs, but they are ignorant about why he puts on such airs and shows concern for no man. Ah! why does he put on airs? Because he has been the intimate of cheek and mole. What say you! Do cheek and mole ever achieve perfection without curl, eyebrow, and hair? No, by God, they do not achieve perfection. Do you not realize that when you pray, you are obliged to say, 'I take refuge in God from Satan the Stoned'? It is exactly for this reason that he puts on airs and plays the vain coquette, for he is himself chief of the prideful and self-conceited.[53]

Instead of driving man away from the door of *illa ʾllāh* with the sword of divine power, or deceiving him with black moonlight, the Iblīs of the curl distracts and seduces man with the amorous gestures of coquetry, thus entangling the soul in the world of lesser spiritual attainments.

> In the artifice of the tip of your curl, we become hapless wretches;
> in the power of your two saucy eyes, we are overwhelmed.
> Because of the impurity in our nature, we feed on blood;
> now, too, in our nature, we feed on sorrow.[54]

The suffering and confusion brought on by the encounter with the Iblīs-curl leaves the soul of the wayfarer stricken and half dead. This Iblīs-induced state is likened by ʿAin Al-Quḍāt to the ecstasy of annihilation, *fanāʾ*, a laudable state but one that is unstable and, therefore, unreliable. *Fanāʾ* must be passed through and superseded by the more mature state of *baqāʾ*, perdurance in divine intimacy. It is this state that for ʿAin Al-Quḍāt is the irrefutable sign of the spiritual attainment of the Sufi practitioner.[55]

In his previous metaphoric constructs, ʿAin Al-Quḍāt indicated that the unique intimacy with the Beloved experienced by Iblīs was also shared by the prophet Muḥammad. The image of the Iblīs-curl is no exception to the rule, for the curl is not alone in its privileged state, lying upon the cheek of the Beloved. The mistress also possesses another mark of beauty, a black mole which is equated with the light of Muḥammad. Both curl and mole spring from the Beloved, however the arrogant curl is seducer while the mole is the guide of Truth. Nevertheless they are both essential stages along the Path to union with the Beloved, the curl and the mole, the light of Iblīs and the light of Muḥammad. Neither can be avoided; on the contrary, they both must be experienced if there is any hope for the Sufi traveller to attain his goal.[56]

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[53] *Ibid.*, p. 121 #169.
[54] *Ibid.*, p. 232 #302.
[55] *Ibid.*, p. 233 #302.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 30 #43.

These images of power, light, and beauty not only illuminate the nature of Iblīs and Muḥammad, but they also provide an insight into the transcendent nature of God Himself. Through the tension between curl and mole, black light and light of Muḥammad, *lā ilāh* and *illa ʾllāh*, God reveals Himself as the creator and source of paradoxes that point beyond themselves to a resolution of conflict in God's very essence. Moreover, to experience the conflict of these opposites is to experience personally the conflict that springs from God and that is resolved only in the serene, unfathomable essence beyond the Beloved's face.[57]

A fundamental presupposition that buttresses all of ʿAin Al-Quḍāt's unique imagery declares that God has Himself willed the creation of these opposing spiritual poles, and that they exist and interact in a state of mutual interdependence. Only by means of one pole can the other be defined and grasped in the fulness of its reality.[58]

> O noble fellow, this is wisdom, that whatever is, was, and may be, may not and could not be otherwise. Whiteness could never exist without blackness; the heavens without earth would not be right; substance could not be conceived without accident; Muḥammad could never exist without Iblīs. Obedience could not exist without disobedience, nor unbelief without faith. And in the same way with all opposites: 'Things manifest themselves through their opposites.'
>
> Muḥammad's faith was impossible without Iblīs' unbelief.... Therefore it is clear that the good fortune of Muḥammad would be nonexistent without the misery of Iblīs; and Abū Bakr and ʿUmar could not exist without Abū Jahl and Abū Lahab.
>
> ...No saint could exist without there being a sinner inseparably joined to his fate; the prophet could never exist without the heedless, nor the righteous without the sinner. Muṣṭafā—may peace be upon him!—was the cause of the mercy showered on creatures; however, in truth, Abū Jahl was the cause of it.... Because through his total villainy the shining essence of Muḥammad became manifest. Have you never heard tell how the black light of Iblīs and Abū Jahl is joined from head to toe with the light of Aḥmad?[59]

Assuredly this creative tension induced by the interaction of spiritual opposites cannot be fully resolved in the realm of human experience. The eternal resolution ultimately occurs only in God. However it would be an unfair reading of ʿAin Al-Quḍāt to restrict the scope of his vision to the beyond, without offering some hope to the Sufi for a resolution of opposites in the here and now.

ʿAin Al-Quḍāt continually urges the Sufi to struggle beyond the sword-wielding chamberlain of black light to the realm of *illa ʾllāh*. He points, of

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[57] *Ibid.*, pp. 118-119 #166.
[58] *Ibid.*, p. 122 #170.
[59] *Ibid.*, pp. 186-188 #245.

course, to the ecstatic experience of mystical union as the foretaste of the final resolution of opposites in God. In the here and now the gnostic lover must mirror in his own life the cosmic resolution of opposites by moving beyond the negative pole of Iblīs and also beyond the positive pole of Islamic faith.

ʿAin Al-Quḍāt describes the righteousness of faith, which is based upon the passage through straying and unbelief, as only a partial advance towards mystical union.[60] The ecstatic experience of union, once attained, obliterates these conflicting spiritual poles and focuses the lover's attention completely on the object of his desire. Nothing matters any longer to the enraptured mystic but his experience of the overwhelming power of divine love: "Unbelief and faith are two veils beyond the Throne between God and the servant, because man must be neither unbeliever nor Muslim."[61]

> Upon the road of wayfarers and in their religion, what is unbelief? what is faith? They both become one. Yūsuf ʿĀmirī said:
>
> In the alley of the tavern, who is darvish? who is king?
> On the road of unity, what is obedience? what is sin?
> Upon the parapet of the Throne, what is the sun? what is the moon?
> Upon the countenance of a Qalendar, what is luminous? what is black?[62]

In ʿAin Al-Quḍāt's mind, a resolution of the tension of spiritual opposites is available in the here and now to the Sufi who attains the pinnacle of religious perfection, union with the Beloved. However, ʿAin Al-Quḍāt does not appear to wish to make a metaphysical statement equating the resolution of opposites that is present within God's essence with the resolution encountered in mystical union. They are not identical, only analogous.

Rather than carefully delineating a metaphysics of mysticism, ʿAin Al-Quḍāt struggles to express the enormous intensity of the mystic's experience of God. To do so he employs elaborate metaphors and poetic hyperbole which, despite their creative originality, cannot encompass the full range of the mystical experience. Mystics in all the major religious traditions testify that the written word falters before the magnitude of God's love. It can do no more than feebly allude to what is encountered as ultimate Truth.

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[60] *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49 #67.
[61] *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123 #171.
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 228 #295.

4. *Iblīs: the paradox of fulfillment through separation*

There remains one final group of paradoxes touching the mythic history of Iblīs that ʿAin Al-Quḍāt discovers imbedded within the final stages of the mystical life. Their focus is on the relation between love and affliction. ʿAin Al-Quḍāt does not intend, however, to overemphasize the morbid elements of the Iblīs myth. On the contrary, the tragedy of Iblīs, when examined through the eyes of this Sufi master, becomes transformed into glorious fulfillment. This paradox reflects not only ʿAin Al-Quḍāt's understanding of Iblīs' relationship with God, but also his own insights into the nature of the mystical love experience, quite apart from Iblīs' particular case.

> Ah! To what do you pay attention? This madman (Iblīs) loved God. Do you know what became the touchstone of his love? On the one hand, affliction and oppression; on the other hand, reproach and humiliation. He (God) said, 'If you lay claim to My love, there must be a sign.' He (God) laid out for him the touchstones of affliction and oppression, blame and humiliation. He accepted in an instant, and these two touchstones testified that the mark of his love was faithfulness. Will you never grasp what I say? In love there must be persecution, and there must be fidelity, so that the lover becomes thoroughly ripened by the gentle kindness and the oppression of the Beloved. Otherwise he remains raw, and nothing comes from him.[63]

Iblīs recognizes the curse from God as the most precious of God's gifts to him, because it is the instrument for his spiritual purification and the emblem of his special relationship with the divine. There is no gift from the Beloved that Iblīs cherishes more;[64] he fixes his eyes intently upon the eternal affliction which, in reality, is for him the food of life. He drinks in the curse as others would drink in the mercy of God, and mercy is to him an abomination.[65]

The curse inflicted on Iblīs by God is not a gesture of divine aggression; it is a challenge to Iblīs and a test of the quality of his love. God's act demands a response; the crux is whether that response will be the resentful cries of the self-styled victim who bemoans having been singled out as the object of divine persecution, or the expressions of magnanimous love from the grateful servant who accepts God's gift of pain because it comes from His hand.[66]

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[63] *Ibid.*, p. 221 #283.

[64] ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:97 #134. See also Abū ʾl-Maʿālī ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Muḥammad ʿAlī Ibn Al-Ḥasan Ibn ʿAlī Al-Mayānajī Al-Hamadhānī (ʿAin Al-Quḍāt), *Risāla-yi lawāyih*, ed. Dr. Raḥīm Farmanish (Tehrān: n.p., 1337 A.H. solar), pp. 24-25.

[65] ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:188 #282. See also 2:411-412 #649-650 and *Tamhīdāt*, p. 226 #292.

[66] ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, p. 223 #287.

This manly fellow Iblīs says, 'If others flee from the blow, I will take it upon my own neck!'... 'Whether my fortune be black or white, both are one since the Beloved made me worthy of His remembrance. Whoever considers these separate, he is still raw in matters of love. When it comes from the loved one's hand, what difference is there between honey and poison? sugar and colocynth? kindness and oppression? Whoever is either a lover of kindness or a lover of oppression, he is a lover of self, not a lover of the Beloved. Ah! When the Lord bestows a special tunic and cap upon someone, this is enough. The rest is not in the reckoning of lovers.

Ah! He (God) asked him (Iblīs), 'This black carpet of My curse, why do you not cast it from your shoulder?' He replied,

'I will not sell this carpet, I will not sell!
If I should sell it, my shoulder would be bare.'[67]

The relationship between Iblīs and God, mediated by God's curse, is one of complete openness and self-donation. In response to every act of destructive power, Iblīs offers himself as sacrifice; when God torments, he accepts; when God oppresses, he increases his love.[68] ʿAin Al-Quḍāt recalls that it was for such unswerving dedication to God that Al-Ḥallāj eulogized Iblīs and Aḥmad.[69] For each, his personal joy and suffering were of negligible concern in comparison with his desire to conform to the will of God: "I am prepared for eternal torment, so be eternally merciless towards me!"[70]

This curse, however, is not a one-dimensional reality; there are several levels encompassed within it, not all of the same spiritual import. The curse of Iblīs by God entailed his removal from the seat of celestial power, the degradation of his external form, his dismissal as treasurer of Paradise, humiliation by God, etc. While these aspects of the curse are never overlooked by the mystical writers, no particular one is singled out as its main, constitutive element. This role is reserved for Iblīs' experience of separation from God. Separation is what impinges most on his relationship with the Beloved:

Behold this oppression which made me wretched!
He himself invited me and He himself drove me away; this is the way He tormented me.[71]

The experience of separation and its opposite, the experience of union with God, become for ʿAin Al-Quḍāt the principal elements in his exposition of the import of the curse on the spiritual life of Iblīs. And in typical fashion, ʿAin Al-Quḍāt molds these elements into a paradox, a juxtaposi-

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[67] *Ibid.*, p. 224 #289.
[68] *Ibid.*, pp. 222-223 #286.
[69] ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:187 #281. See also *Tamhīdāt*, p. 223 #288, p. 284 #369.
[70] *Ibid.*, 2:187 #281.
[71] ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, p. 225 #290.

tion of opposites that turns the accepted views of spiritual guides topsy-turvy. Separation, not union, he insists, is the hallmark of intimacy with God.

Firstly, the separation of Iblīs is a blessing, not so much because of the actual experience of separation, but because any gesture bestowed by God on His creature is far superior to being forgotten and ignored by Him. The nature of the gesture is unimportant, only the fact of the relationship matters.

> The station of the perfection of love is that station in which, if one heard an insult from the Beloved, it would be more agreeable than the kindness of others. Whoever is unaware of this fact, he is an ignorant soul on the Path of love. But have you not heard this verse?
>
> Separation from You is more agreeable than union with others;
> to be repudiated by You is better than the acceptance of others.[72]

Secondly, separation is affirmed as a value in and for itself because it represents the most crucial test of the mettle of the Sufi's love. Consequently separation is unavoidable for one who aspires to the loftiest mystical goals. However, prolonged separation and the intensity of the ever present desire for union work together to inflict the most wrenching of agonies upon the tormented soul:

> You set a fire in my heart and You pour oil on my soul;
> then You say, 'Keep our secret hidden!'[73]

Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī, revered master of ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, too, proclaims separation a higher degree of mystic fulfillment than union, in addition to its being the final test of love. Why is it superior to the unitive state? Unless one has previously experienced union, one cannot know separation; union is, therefore, only a preparation for the more exalted state of separation.[74] Not only is separation on a loftier plane, but it possesses the unique quality of dynamic tension which is completely absent from the static state of peaceful union. The mystic Fakhr Ad-Dīn ʿIrāqī likens the power of separation to a fire scourge that drives the soul unceasingly towards God. Because of its inherent dynamism, separation, he claims, cannot but be more fruitful than the state of union; and it is the Beloved's knowledge of this paradoxical truth that makes separation and distance His most precious gift, reserved for the elect alone.

> I desire union with Him; He desires separation from me;
> so I abandon what I desire for what He desires.[75]

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[72] *Ibid.*, pp. 221-222 #284.

[73] ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:418 #660.

[74] Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī, *Sawāniḥ*, p. 48 #28.

[75] Fakhr Ad-Dīn Ibrāhīm ʿIrāqī, *Risāla-yi lamaʿāt wa risāla-yi iṣṭilāḥāt*, ed. Dr. Javād Nūrbakhsh (Tehrān: Khānqāh-yi niʿmat Allāhī, 1353 A.H. solar), p. 41 #22.

This dynamic tension present in the state of separation is analogous to the ardor and zeal that characterize the love experience itself. This ardor, Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī explains, is so essential to love that the Beloved, when caught in the trap of peaceful union, grows restless in this confining role, because the ardor of the quest has been dissipated. In reaction the Beloved manifests His omnipotence, as He did, for example, when He cursed Iblīs who dared believe that the love object somehow could be encompassed through union.[76]

God's perfection needs no fulfillment through a mystical relationship with man. The state of separation, therefore, more aptly reflects the eternal tension between God's transcendent perfection and the dynamism of the human spirit's yearning in love for intimacy with the divine Other.

The ultimate goal, separation, is attained only by the very few whose long experience of union prepares them sufficiently for the excruciating torment that characterizes its every aspect. This honor was not accorded Iblīs until he had proven himself through aeons of faithful dedication to the divine will.

> He (Iblīs) said, 'For so many thousands of years I was a diligent worshipper in the alley of the Beloved. When He finally accepted me, rejection became my portion from Him.... When He bestowed His mercy upon me, He cursed me: "For upon you is My curse, until the Day of Judgement." '[77]

Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī relates that, in recognition of this extraordinary achievement which was won only after ages of strenuous ascetical training, Iblīs was granted the title of Lord of the Separated Ones.[78] This title attests to all creatures that Iblīs has been especially chosen by the Beloved to be the recipient of His choicest gift, His curse, which Iblīs will cherish for all eternity.[79]

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[76] Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī, *Sawāniḥ*, pp. 94-95 #64.

[77] ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, p. 225 #290.

The affirmation of the primacy of separation over union, which is expressed by ʿAin Al-Quḍāt and others, should not be construed as the general Sufi understanding of these two stages of the Path. Most theorists opt for the traditional view that union is the ultimate goal of the mystic life, as these verses of Ash-Shiblī illustrate:

> If separation dwelt in Paradise, Paradise would be transformed;
> the blessings of Paradise would be Hell for God's servants.
> If union dwelt in Hell, Hell would be transformed;
> the fire of Hell would be a blessing for God's servants.

See Abū Bakr Ash-Shiblī, *Dīwān*, ed. Dr. Kāmil Muṣṭafā ʾsh-Shaybī (Baghdād: Dār al-mutaḍāmin, 1967 C.E.-1386 A.H.), p. 123 #57.

[78] ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:97 #134, 2:416 #657; *Lawāyiḥ*, p. 24. See also Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, p. 416.

[79] ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:97 #134.

ʿAin Al-Quḍāt does not, however, restrict this gift to Iblīs alone; it is open to those Sufis whose perfection of life allows them to cope with the paradoxical truth that God's curse, especially the curse of separation, is the ultimate goal of the mystical life. The seeds of this attitude are buried in the paradoxes of Al-Ḥallāj, especially his desire to incur God's wrath and suffer destruction at the hands of the faithful. He gloried, not in the praise afforded him for his sanctity, but in the curses heaped upon him for his infidelity.[80] Al-Ḥallāj baited the pious Muslims with his shouts of ecstasy that smacked of heresy, while in private he performed the ritual prayers enjoined by the law. His purpose, he explained, was to bring about the death of "the accursed one," i.e., himself.[81]

Kill me, my trusted friends,
for in my death is my life!
Death for me is in living, and
life for me is in dying.
The obliteration of my essence
is the noblest of blessings.
My perdurance in my human attributes,
the vilest of evils.[82]

It is ʿAin Al-Quḍāt who brought these seeds to fruition by specifying that life-giving death is embodied in the curse of separation. And it is he who molds this paradox into a theoretical analysis of the structure of the Sufi Path. For him the experience of union is the experience of the beauty of the Beloved that feeds the soul and nourishes it with coquetry and amorous glances. But this nourishment fattens the soul and makes it lethargic. Only separation can accomplish the weaning process, for the Sufi must detach himself even from the joy and security of union with the Beloved. When the traveller finally progresses through union to separation, there he encounters the face of Iblīs, and the glory of the Separated One's perfection.[83]

5. *Iblīs: predestined yet free*

Much of our discussion concerning the use of the Iblīs myth to develop an elaborate science of opposites depicts Iblīs in the role of malleable instrument, joined to God in an intense love-relationship. Whereas the instrumentality of Muḥammad unfolds in the context of right-guidance, the characteristic of Iblīs' instrumentality is *kufr*, the promulgation of

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[80] See Ḥusayn Ibn Manṣūr Al-Ḥallāj, *Akhbār Al-Ḥallāj*, 3rd edition, ed. and tr. Louis Massignon (Paris: J. Vrin, 1957), pp. 14-15 and pp. 84-86 of the Arabic text.

[81] *Ibid.*, pp. 81-83 of the Arabic text.

[82] Al-Ḥallāj, *Dīwān*, pp. 33-34 l. 1-4.

[83] ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:416-417 #657.

unbelief. Both, however, are true to their callings and never swerve from the faithful living-out of their appointed offices.

This emphasis on the instrumentality of Iblīs and Muḥammad cannot but raise the question of how involved each is personally in the acting-out of the particular cosmic task to which he is assigned. Are Iblīs and Muḥammad capable of freely assuming their responsibilities, or are they just religious robots, blindly conforming to the will of the master planner?

The complexities of the question of free will as it touches Iblīs became apparent in the previous chapter.[84] The insights expressed by the Sufis skilled in the science of opposites manifest many of the same conflicts between free will and predestination that raised their heads in the works of those Sufi theorists discussed earlier. The pervasive conviction among the majority of both groups is that God is directly involved in the actual deeds of His creatures, and, therefore, is ultimately responsible for them.

ʿAin Al-Quḍāt proves to be no exception in his description of the moral accountability of Iblīs and Muḥammad. He asserts that all deeds that seem to be the product of an individual's free choice, and are thereby ascribed to him, must be seen in the light of God's role as ultimate causal agent. Man's apparent freedom is just a metaphor; the deed in its reality must be ascribed to God.

> Muḥammad's power to guide, know it to be a metaphor; and Iblīs' power to lead astray, in the same way know it to be a metaphor. Know the truth to be, 'He leads astray whomever He wills, and He guides whomever He wills' (Qurʾān 16:93). I admit Iblīs leads creatures astray, but who created Iblīs with such a characteristic?[85]

Iblīs possesses powers only by extension, because God has granted them to him, and he makes use of his own potentialities like a servant acting in accordance with his master's desires. There is no possibility that Iblīs will rise up in defiance and perform what God does not will, for what God does not will, does not come to be.[86]

The essence of instrumentality is loving obedience; there is no need for logical explanations from God nor for the servant to delve into the ultimate reasons behind God's choice of one particular action over another. God chose, for example, to shower His favors on ʿUmar, who was an idol-worshipper, and He chose to condemn Iblīs, who served Him for thousands of years. The servant is enjoined only to accept the paradox

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[84] See Ch. 2, pp. 96-109.

[85] ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, p. 188 #246. See also *Nāmahā*, 2:7 #9; Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, p. 415.

[86] ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:68-69 #93. See also 1:371 #618.

of God's decree, not to interrogate Him about its justice: "He is not questioned about what He does" (Qurʾān 21:23).[87]

At every step of his growing relationship with God, the Sufi encounters the unfathomable, conflicting realities that make up God's plan. To ignore them, or worse, to try to escape them, is to deny God's omnipotence and raise oneself up as final arbiter of reality in God's place. This is *shirk*, associationism, in its most blatant form and not the stance of the true believer, who, like ʿIrāqī, stands awestruck in the face of the turmoil created by God's eternal will.

> He created being out of nothingness, for the sake of His own splendor;
> but at the same time He placed the mark of being on the markless.
> A spirit possessed of such purity, He cast into the pit of the body;
> a secret possessed of such nobility, He hid in the lower recesses of the soul.
> He made Himself Adam's guide towards the wheat;
> He placed Iblīs in man's midst, for chastisement's sake.

ʿIrāqī goes on to describe how, even though God authors each deed, He places the blame for it on the shoulders of man. Some He chooses for Hell, others for Heaven. Throughout the process it is unseemly for man to inquire how or why, rather he must rely on his love-relationship to point the way to the meaning that lies beyond human understanding.[88]

Despite this definite emphasis on instrumentality with its resultant passivity and submission, a clear commitment to man's freedom of choice is evident among the Sufis who profess the science of opposites. God's power is all pervasive, they agree, yet he would not allow man to be reduced to the state of an automaton.

> O noble fellow, whatever happens in this world or the world of spirits, every single act is a determined act, fixed. However, a man is not compelled to perform one particular fixed act, rather he is compelled to exercise free choice. In the same way that burning is linked with fire, free will is linked to man. In the same way that for fire there is no unique characteristic except burning, for man there is no unique characteristic except free choice.[89]

Freedom, therefore, is man's distinguishing quality that opens up to him the unique possibility of choice. However, this freedom must somehow be correlated with God's pervasive control over all that occurs in the universe:

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[87] *Ibid.*, 1:376 #626.

[88] Fakhr Ad-Dīn Ibrāhīm ʿIrāqī, *Kullīyāt*, ed. Saʿīd Nafīsī (Tehrān: Kitābkhāna-yi Sanāʾī, 1338 A.H. solar), pp. 267 l. 3770-268 l. 3779. The translation is of lines 3773-3775.

[89] ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, pp. 189-190 #247.

> However, whomever He created for happiness, that man can choose only from among the deeds of the saved; and whomever He created for torment, that man can choose only from the actions of the damned. He provides explanations for the people of faith...and He reproaches the people of unbelief, promising them the fire.[90]

This compromise solution proposed by ʿAin Al-Quḍāt does not deal adequately with the problem because it does not touch the heart of the matter, namely, moral choice. Can one who is originally good choose evil, and vice versa? ʿAin Al-Quḍāt's compromise would indicate that this avenue is not open to man, and his analysis of Iblīs' refusal to bow seems to corroborate this opinion. It is one thing, he explains, to be informed about the nature of God's command, and quite another to be in touch with God's will. The command of God is but an external, and sometimes ambiguous, phenomenon. Only in grasping God's will does the faithful soul fully comprehend what is expected of him.

> For example, if a father says to his son, 'Do not show me affection anymore! I am ashamed of you,' and that son redoubles his attentiveness towards his father, he is not opposing his father, by my life! He is opposing his command. But this is not contrary to his will. If Sultan Maḥmūd had said to Ayāz, 'Go! Serve another,' and he had gone, that would have been a sin. He who obeys in that situation is immature.[91]

Iblīs, therefore, never strayed from the path of goodness for which he had been created and upon which he had embarked with such spiritual ardor. His choices were in conformity with the choices open to those destined from all eternity for divine blessing. God's command to Iblīs to bow was but a test; God never intended for it to be carried out. All the angels bowed except the foremost one among them, their preceptor, Iblīs, who was able to delve within the mystery of God's will. Was it not inevitable that the teacher's insight surpass that of his charges? His years of preparation and loyal worship stood him in good stead at this final moment of crisis:

> 'If You should cut me to pieces out of love,
> my heart would not yearn for another than You.
> If You should rain down thorn and thistle upon my head,
> I would stitch together what you rain down into a cloak.'
>
> He freely chose separation from the Beloved over bowing to another. How great is the fulness of his love![92]

The essential continuity between the refusal to bow and God's foreordained will is reinforced by creating a non-Qurʾānic dialogue between

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[90] *Ibid.*

[91] ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:75 #98.

[92] *Ibid.*, 1:96 #132.

God and Iblīs in which God secretly reveals to Iblīs His particular will for him, while at the same time proclaiming a general command to the choirs of angelic hosts. This secret conversation is proof positive that Iblīs was especially privileged with access to the hidden depths of God's design for the cosmos.

> Ah! Just as Gabriel, Michael, and the other angels heard in the realm of hiddenness, 'Bow to Adam!' in the hiddenness of the world of hiddenness and contemplation He spoke again (to Iblīs), 'Do not bow to another than Me!'... In public He says, 'Bow to Adam!' and in secret He said to him, 'O Iblīs, reply, "Will I bow to one whom You have created from clay?" ' This itself is something of a different sort![93]

> And so that wretched fellow, in accord with what he was ordered in secret, said, 'I will not bow to one whom You have created from clay.' He replied, 'My curse is upon you!' He answered, 'Since the robe of honor comes from You, whether it bring curse or mercy, no matter.'[94]

The upshot of ʿAin Al-Quḍāt's treatment of Iblīs' limited freedom is a vindication of the righteousness of his choice not to bow to Adam. On the other hand, his limited freedom also brings him face to face with the paradox hidden in God's design. He, who was the teacher of the angels, the ascetic whose cell lay at the foot of the Divine Throne, as a result of his free conformation to God's will, has become "the plaything of the children of Your (i.e., the Beloved's) alley."[95]

Despite the fact that he is declared possessor of the unique gift of freedom, limited though it be, Iblīs is incapable of unraveling the tangled strands that make up God's will; the power of choice does not of itself produce insight. Even though one possesses the power to recognize God's will and submit before it, there is no human faculty that can plumb the depths or resolve the paradoxes of His decrees:

> He cast him into the ocean, firmly bound, and said to him,
> 'You there! take care not to get wet!'[96]

B. *From Condemnation to Rehabilitation*

1. *Iblīs: recapitulation of fundamental themes — I*

Thus far several different branches of the Iblīs motif were described and analyzed in the contexts in which each developed. The various strains were discovered not to be bound to one, progressive,

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[93] ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, p. 227 #293. See also *Nāmahā*, 2:186-188 #280-282, 2:411-412 #649-650; Massignon, *Recueil de textes inédits*, pp. 101-102.

[94] ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:187 #280.

[95] *Ibid.*, 2:417 #658.

[96] *Ibid.*, 2:412 #650. See also Massignon, *Recueil de textes inédits*, p. 102.

chronological development; more often than not, they evolved in parallel fashion with occasional crisscrossing and intertwining in the works of one or more Sufis. These different lines of development not only afford unique perspectives on the life, personality, and symbolic significance of the Iblīs figure, they also take opposing stands on Iblīs' moral character. This judgement for or against Iblīs serves as the dividing line between the Sufis discussed in Chapter 2 and those of Chapter 3. For the former, Iblīs is a morally corrupt being who flaunted his arrogance in the face of God and spread his contagion among mankind; while, for the latter, he is the obedient, loving instrument of the Divine, and the model for the mystic life of self-sacrifice.

In the above examination of the Iblīs literature, aspects of these evolving strains were exemplified in the lives and works of individual Sufis, but the whole range of perspectives, with its contrasts and contradictions, needs yet to be discovered in the corpus of an individual Sufi writer. While this is not a common occurrence, it is, nevertheless, observable most especially in the work of Farīd Ad-Dīn ʿAṭṭār (†1220 C.E.) and, to a lesser degree, in that of Ḥakīm Abū ʾl-Majd Majdūd Ibn Ādam Sanāʾī Ghaznavī (†1131 C.E.). ʿAṭṭār and Sanāʾī recapitulate many of the images and symbols of the Iblīs motif, even to the point of voicing contradictory opinions within their own works about Iblīs' ultimate worth and God's final judgement on his life and actions.

The starting point for ʿAṭṭār and Sanāʾī's treatments of Iblīs is the same as that of many early religious writers, namely the realization that Iblīs is intimately involved in man's very existence. ʿAṭṭār incorporates into one of his own didactic treatises the myth of Adam and Eve's encounter with Iblīs and Al-Khannās, which was originally ascribed in the *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ* to the Sufi Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī At-Tirmidhī.[97] In contrast to the prose presentation of the mythic tale in the *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, its poetic adaptation in the *Ilāhīnāma* includes at the end a commentary by ʿAṭṭār which makes definite reference to the *ḥadīth* describing Satan's presence in man's very lifeblood:

'Since I (Iblīs) have cast myself within his interior,
Adam's offspring will be subject to my affliction.
Sometimes with Khannās' help, I will, by my whispering,
set in man's bosom a hundred snares of ignominy.
Other times I will stir up a hundred kinds of passion within him;
I will become like blood in his veins.

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[97] See Ch. 2, pp. 62-64. No discussion of ʿAṭṭār should neglect the extraordinary work of Hellmut Ritter. See especially *Das Meer der Seele* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), pp. 536-550, where he lays the groundwork for a study of the Iblīs motif in the literary corpus of ʿAṭṭār.

Sometimes I will urge him especially to acts of devotion;
but from that devotion I ultimately intend hypocrisy, not sincerity.
I will employ a thousand other kinds of sorcery
to deflect man from the true Path.'
Since Satan has made his home inside of you,
he has seated himself in power and set up his throne.
. . . . . .
He waylays you on the Path, and because of the suffering induced by this deed,
your eyes have become like blood-raining clouds.
If it was Adam's fate, because he gazed on one grain of wheat,
to be obliged to weep for three hundred years,
Look at how many tears Iblīs must shed,
he who bears God's curse and is consumed with jealousy![98]

In addition to the image of Satan abiding in man's bloodstream, ʿAṭṭār describes him as nesting in man's innermost core. To be rid of Iblīs, the Sufi must burn his heart clean in the fire of the ascetical life so that there remains no longer a hospitable place for Satan to alight.[99] Sanāʾī, for his part, depicts Iblīs living comfortably under man's skin until that day when the power of mystic love frees the novice from his hold.[100] Even Muḥammad, ʿAṭṭār recalls, was possessed of a satanic companion who, happily, converted to Islam on hearing the proclamation of God's Qurʾān.[101]

Satan's chief ally, say ʿAṭṭār and Sanāʾī, is man's *nafs*, the lower soul, which, like a puppet, submits to Iblīs in the same way that the peacock and the serpent became his pawns in Paradise.[102] The *nafs* thrives especially well on sensual pleasure and worldly delight.[103]

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[98] ʿAṭṭār, *Ilāhīnāma*, pp. 127 l. 1-129 l. 2. The quotation begins on p. 128 l. 9.

Sanāʾī also makes reference to Al-Khannās as a title for Iblīs. See Ḥakīm Abū ʾl-Majd Majdūd Ibn Ādam Sanāʾī Ghaznavī, *Makātīb Sanāʾī*, ed. Nadhīr Aḥmad (ʿAlīgarh: Dānishgāh-yi islāmī, 1962 C.E.-1382 A.H.-1341 A.H. solar), pp. 65 l. 3-7, 74 l. 6-13.

It should be noted that reference to the presence of Iblīs in man's bloodstream is found even in the work of a Sufi like ʿAin Al-Quḍāt (see *Nāmahā*, 2:383 #600). Nevertheless, his presuppositions are quite different from those of ʿAṭṭār and Sanāʾī because he has a clearly defined view of Iblīs as the obedient instrument of God. There is no moral culpability in ʿAin Al-Quḍāt's Iblīs, whereas ʿAṭṭār and Sanāʾī, it will be seen, present conflicting views, sometimes agreeing with ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, other times reflecting the opinion of those who brand Iblīs a despicable foe. Consequently, even though they may refer to the same text or employ similar images, their understandings of the symbols differ substantially because of the presuppositions on which they are based.

[99] Farīd Ad-Dīn ʿAṭṭār Nayshābūrī, *Muṣībatnāma*, ed. Dr. Nūrānī Wiṣāl (Tehrān: Zawār, 1338 A.H. solar), p. 240 l. 11-17. Similarly in ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:425 #711.

[100] Ḥakīm Abū ʾl-Majd Majdūd Ibn Ādam Sanāʾī Ghaznavī, *Dīwān*, ed. Mudarris Raḍawī (Tehrān: Kitābkhāna-yi Ibn Sīnā, 1341 A.H. solar-1962 C.E.), p. 694 l. 5.

[101] Farīd Ad-Dīn ʿAṭṭār Nayshābūrī, *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr*, ed. Dr. Muḥammad Javād Mashkūr (Tehrān: Kitābfurūshī-yi Tehrān, 1353 A.H. solar-1968 C.E.), p. 19 l. 4.

[102] Sanāʾī, *Makātīb*, pp. 57 l. 11-58 l. 5; *Dīwān*, p. 188 l. 2.

[103] ʿAṭṭār, *Ilāhīnāma*, p. 29 l. 1.

You are filled with passion, and desire deceives you;
the sensual form of reality is your Iblīs.
If you wish to distance yourself from this Iblīs,
break the neck of form altogether.[104]

But many of a malleable nature follow the guidance of their *nafs*; too late they discover that they have become prisoners of the Evil-One.[105] Consider not the *nafs* a submissive or weak adversary; its venomous whispers are more deadly than the stings of scorpions;[106] its aggressiveness and tenacity are that of a savage dog capable of subduing lions.[107]

As long as you possess this dog-like *nafs*,
Iblīs will not flee from your heart.
Iblīs' coquetry is for the sake of your deception;
each and every desire in you is your Iblīs.
If you bring one of your desires to fruition,
a hundred new Iblīses are born in you, and so on.[108]

In ʿAṭṭār's mind, the options are clear. The believer must submit his *nafs* to the ascetical life and subdue it, otherwise it will ceaselessly chase after Satan and his favors. This process of ascetic purification prepares the soul of each Sufi wayfarer for a transformation analogous to that which took place within Muḥammad's soul when his satanic *nafs* converted to Islam at the sound of the recitation of God's Qurʾān.[109]

If the *nafs* is Satan's most versatile weapon, the arena in which it is put to greatest use is the *dunyā*, the world.[110] The *dunyā* is Satan's own valley, the domain over which he reigns as unrivaled lord.[111]

Pass by the valley of Satan; seek out the Lover;
for how long will you remain outside the veil?
. . . . . .
Whoever makes a covenant with the Satan of the *dunyā*,
how will the honey of *alast* ever touch his mouth?

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[104] Farīd Ad-Dīn ʿAṭṭār Nayshābūrī, *Ushturnāma*, ed. Dr. Mahdī Muḥaqqiq (Tehrān: Chāp-i tābān, 1339 A.H. solar), p. 128 l. 10-11.

[105] Farīd Ad-Dīn ʿAṭṭār Nayshābūrī, *Dīwān: qaṣāʾid wa tarjiʿāt wa ghazalīyāt*, ed. Saʿid Nafīsī (Tehrān: Kitābkhāna-yi Sanāʾī, 1339 A.H. solar), p. 390 l. 7367.

[106] Farīd Ad-Dīn ʿAṭṭār Nayshābūrī, *Lisān al-ghayb bi ḍamīma miftāḥ al-irāda*, ed. Aḥmad Khushnavīs ʿAmmād (Tehrān: Intishārāt-i kitābfurūshī-yi Maḥmūdī, 1344 A.H. solar), p. 13 l. 3-4. It should be noted that the authenticity of the *Lisān al-ghayb* is disputed.

[107] ʿAṭṭār, *Dīwān*, p. 30 l. 478. See also p. 76 l. 1302.

[108] ʿAṭṭār, *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr*, p. 131 l. 6-8.

[109] ʿAṭṭār, *Ilāhīnāma*, pp. 77 l. 20-78 l. 1.

[110] Farīd Ad-Dīn ʿAṭṭār Nayshābūrī, *Maẓhar al-ʿajāʾib wa maẓhar*, ed. Aḥmad Khushnavīs ʿAmmād (Tehrān: Kitābkhāna-yi Sanāʾī, 1345 A.H. solar), pp. 235 l. 5287-236 l. 5313. See also *Lisān al-ghayb*, p. 75 l. 15. The authenticity of the *Maẓhar al-ʿajāʾib* is disputed.

[111] ʿAṭṭār, *Lisān al-ghayb*, p. 135 l. 8.

Whoever becomes a lover of the here and now with Satan,
in the end times the Avenger will strip the skin from his body.
Whoever drinks wine with Satan here,
he will be roasted in the fire of Hell.
Abandon your gaze upon the Satan of this world,
if you still desire union with your Friend.[112]

Nowhere else does Iblīs achieve such resounding victories than in the *dunyā*; nowhere else is the power of ruse and deception more potent, nor man more vulnerable.[113]

He who is a man of cunning and deception,
is neither maternal nor paternal uncle; he is Iblīs.[114]

Both Sanāʾī and ʿAṭṭār witness forcefully to the ravages of fraudulent deception on the souls of the just. Because of it an ʿAzāzīl fell from the heavens and became an Iblīs.[115] To follow in his footsteps is to end up a companion of Iblīs in Hell,[116] or perhaps a carcass cast into his furnace.[117] All of man's daily actions of social intercourse are fraught with danger because everything that partakes of worldliness is tainted by the touch of Iblīs. What appears sweet and pleasurable in the world of Iblīs, like delicate almond candies arranged upon his tray, when put to the mouth, is found to be cloves of sugarcoated garlic.[118]

If Iblīs quits the bazaars,
how will the bazaars function?
Because the world in its entirety is his bazaar,
inflated selling and buying are his work.
To him and no one else belong the Great Bazaar, every bazaar;
no worldly deed occurs without him, not for a moment.[119]

The man of the world who excels at pretense, ruse, and deception is he who bears the mark of Iblīs.[120] With such a man Iblīs need no longer struggle, for they both are now members of the same troop. Iblīs has

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[112] *Ibid.*, p. 113 l. 8, l. 13-16.

[113] See Farīd Ad-Dīn ʿAṭṭār Nayshābūrī, *Asrārnāma*, ed. Dr. Sayyid Ṣādiq Gawharīn (Tehrān: Chāp-i sharq, 1959 C.E.-1338 A.H. solar), p. 32 l. 497-500; *Ushturnāma*, p. 174 l. 16-18.

[114] Ḥakīm Abū ʾl-Majd Majdūd Ibn Ādam Sanāʾī Ghaznavī, *Kitāb ḥadīqat al-ḥaqīqa wa sharīʿat aṭ-ṭarīqa*, ed. Mudarris Raḍawī (Tehrān: Chāpkhāna-yi sipihr, 1329 A.H. solar-1950 C.E.), p. 259 l. 11. See also p. 302 l. 14, p. 379 l. 6 and p. 742 l. 17.

[115] Sanāʾī, *Ḥadīqa*, p. 303 l. 8.

[116] ʿAṭṭār, *Ilāhīnāma*, p. 91 l. 8; Farīd Ad-Dīn ʿAṭṭār Nayshābūrī, *Pandnāma (Le Livre des conseils)*, ed. and tr. Silvestre De Sacy (Paris: L'Imprimerie Royale, 1819), p. 100 l. 6-7 of the Persian text.

[117] Sanāʾī, *Ḥadīqa*, pp. 339 l. 20-340 l. 1.

[118] Sanāʾī, *Dīwān*, p. 291 l. 3.

[119] ʿAṭṭār, *Muṣībatnāma*, pp. 122 l. 20-123 l. 1.

[120] ʿAṭṭār, *Miftāḥ al-irāda*, p. 237 l. 13.

permeated every pore of his flesh and has nested at the root of each hair of his head.[121] The student, thus transformed, begins to rival his master in the skill with which he perpetrates fraud and deception upon his fellows:

Because this age is rife with deception,
Iblīs takes his nourishment from *lā ḥawla*!
You are so adept at ruse and fraud,
that even Iblīs flees from you![122]

The more Iblīs-like a man becomes in his inner being, the more proficient he becomes at putting on the external airs of a pious Muslim. To have mastered the art of feigning the spiritual guide is to have achieved the pinnacle of satanic achievement, for nothing corrupts quicker the naive and unsuspecting novice than the false counsel of a pseudo-*shaykh*.[123]

On this Path there are a hundred thousand Adam-faced Iblīses;
so take care not to reckon every Adam-face an Adam.[124]

There are also, as noted, descriptions of Iblīs that highlight the cruder, predatory aspects of his nature, for, when subtlety and cunning prove inadequate, Iblīs reverts to more violent tactics. ʿAṭṭār speaks of this Iblīs who waits in ambush like the hunter, to pounce upon the innocent passerby.[125] Or Iblīs appears as the highwayman in the guise of a boon companion or fellow traveller, who waylays the novice struggling along the Path.[126]

Nevertheless Satan cannot overcome his prey without at least tacit cooperation on the part of the victim. A heart filled with God leaves no room for Iblīs; conversely, it is the forgetful heart that invites the satanic guest to establish therein his permanent abode.

Whenever your heart is empty of the memory of God,
the accursed devil becomes your companion on the Path.[127]

If for one moment you are forgetful of the Merciful God,
in that instant you become Satan's companion.[128]

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[121] ʿAṭṭār, *Muṣībatnāma*, p. 122 l. 10.
[122] Sanāʾī, *Ḥadīqa*, p. 676 l. 3-4.
[123] See Sanāʾī, *Dīwān*, p. 701 l. 7.
[124] Sanāʾī, *Makātīb*, p. 56 l. 11-12. See also *Dīwān*, p. 656 l. 7.
[125] ʿAṭṭār, *Maẓhar al-ʿajāʾib*, p. 258 l. 198; *Miftāḥ al-irāda*, p. 247 l. 5, l. 13; *Lisān al-ghayb*, p. 94 l. 17.
[126] ʿAṭṭār, *Lisān al-ghayb*, p. 154 l. 10-16; *Maẓhar al-ʿajāʾib*, p. 150 l. 3368, p. 168 l. 3778-3779.
[127] ʿAṭṭār, *Pandnāma*, p. 32 l. 7-8 of the Persian text.
[128] *Ibid.*, p. 45 l. 12-13 of the Persian text. See also pp. 8 l. 13-9 l. 1 and p. 125 l. 6-15 of the Persian text.

ʿAṭṭār counsels the initiate not to toy with Satan's works or take lightly even casual involvements with Iblīs along the Path. One false step into his domain is fatal; it results in a complete transformation into the despised image of Ash-Shayṭān himself.[129] Above all the pious seeker must be vigilant, and he must ponder seriously the counsel he receives from his *shaykh*. Only then can he attain sufficient insight to understand the many complex and confusing aspects of the mystic life.

> If you be not knowledgeable about this Path,
> your only vision will be of Satan;
> Your blessings will seem satanic,
> all your light will appear obscure.[130]

ʿAṭṭār is tireless in his warnings against joining the hordes of Iblīs' followers who infest the *dunyā* to spread their disease.[131] Iblīs reduces this mass of corrupt humanity to the most abject servitude; he invests each with the mantle of his service and attaches his collar of fire around every neck.[132] No longer do their cries of *lā ḥawla* move the Almighty to compassion, for these spiritual corpses are Muslim in name only.[133] In their distraction, these pathetic folk chase mindlessly after Iblīs on their way to eternal damnation, their souls eaten away by Satan's delusions of worldly delight.[134] They will suffer the same torments he does because of their reliance on the world; they, like him, will remain ever separated from God, driven like devils from the threshold of the Almighty.[135]

2. *Jesus and the rock*

In the recapitulation of the various strains of the Iblīs motif in the works of ʿAṭṭār and Sanāʾī, one mythic tale attains particular prominence, the story of Iblīs chiding Jesus for using a stone as pillow. It highlights especially well their attitudes toward the *dunyā*. The previous encounter with this fable, in the works of Al-Makkī, Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, and Al-Kubrā,[136] occurred in a significantly different context. While there is no doubt that these Sufi theorists were pointing to the danger latent in even the slightest involvement with the world, they were, at the same time, revealing facets of Iblīs' character that seem far

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[129] ʿAṭṭār, *Maẓhar al-ʿajāʾib*, p. 198 l. 4462 and *Pandnāma*, p. 117 l. 11-12 of the Persian text. See also *Maẓhar al-ʿajāʾib*, p. 26 l. 582 and p. 27 l. 604.

[130] ʿAṭṭār, *Ilāhīnāma*, p. 219 l. 7-8.

[131] ʿAṭṭār, *Lisān al-ghayb*, p. 177 l. 10ff. See also p. 94 l. 3-5.

[132] ʿAṭṭār, *Maẓhar al-ʿajāʾib*, p. 286 l. 855-857; *Pandnāma*, p. 33 l. 4-5 of the Persian text.

[133] ʿAṭṭār, *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr*, p. 132 l. 10-12.

[134] ʿAṭṭār, *Lisān al-ghayb*, pp. 90 l. 8-91 l. 6, p. 174 l. 6-9.

[135] *Ibid.*, p. 61 l. 21 and p. 64 l. 7.

[136] See Ch. 2, pp. 89-90.

removed from the cliché picture of a one-dimensional force of worldly evil. Far from being the tempter, Iblīs is acting in this fable as the wise counsellor, the *shaykh* concerned for the spiritual progress of his disciple. Consequently, Iblīs takes pains to point out to Jesus that he is not as detached from the world as he might presume because he still employs an object from the world for comfort, the stone pillow on which he rests his head.

The versions of this tale that both Sanāʾī and ʿAṭṭār incorporate into their works downplay the *shaykh*-like qualities demonstrated by Iblīs. In their amplifications of the tale and the commentaries they append to it, they show that their predominant concern is to prevent the Sufi practitioner from having anything to do with the material world, no matter how innocent or commonplace the particular object appears. Sanāʾī's version of this story illustrates well their common approach:

In the tradition I have read that the Spirit of God (Jesus)
was out one night, unexpectedly, in the desert.
After some time had passed, he became drowsy,
and made haste to find a place to sleep.
He espied a fallen rock and made it his pillow;
he hastened no further and went to sleep.
For a time he slept; but suddenly he awoke
and saw Iblīs in that out-of-the-way place.
He cried, 'O outcast! O accursed dog!
for what purpose have you sneaked up on me?
How is it you seek refuge in a place
that is a protected habitation for Jesus?'
He replied, 'You have brought trouble for me,
for you have appropriated my goods in my own very palace!
Why, then, do you inconvenience me?
Why do you appropriate the goods in my palace?
The kingdom of the world, all of it, is my palace;
you do not possess dominion, I do.
But when you plunder my possessions,
you render me helpless because of your inviolability.'
He (Jesus) replied, 'What trouble have I caused you?
Tell me how I have made designs against your goods.'
He answered, 'This stone which is your pillow,
when you were tired, did you not take it from the world?'
Hastily Jesus hurled the rock away;
when he did this, the body of Iblīs dissolved.[137]

Before departing, however, Iblīs must have the last word. At the same time that he affirms that Jesus has now freed himself from the grasp of the world, he repeats his accusation that Jesus had no business toying with it

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[137] Sanāʾī, *Ḥadīqa*, pp. 392 l. 18-393 l. 10.

in the first place.[138] The world belongs to Iblīs and is his proper domain. Sanāʾī's commentary reiterates his previous warnings against involvements in this realm of Satan with its apparent joys and pleasures. It is impossible, Sanāʾī claims, for the believer to grasp the ultimate consequences of such foolish risks. True hope lies only in the total abandonment of the world and the annihilation of desire.[139]

Continuing with his commentary, Sanāʾī describes his vision of what epitomizes the consummate worldling; he is the crude, obese glutton whose voracious appetite exceeds that of the cow, and whose gullet is little more than a sewer-like trough. This is the degradation that awaits the unwary dabbler in worldly delights. Do not, Sanāʾī counsels, treat sensuality as a plaything, for it possesses power of deadly proportions:

> Whoever strives against desire like Jesus,
> he will escape from the torment of his existence.
> . . . . . .
> In this state, take my advice,
> put on a coat of mail against the power of the enemy.
> Your enemy is the accursed world;
> extricate your intellect from its snare.[140]

ʿAṭṭār treats this fable in two separate works, the *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr* and the *Muṣībatnāma.*[141] Both instances are virtually identical with regard to plot line; the commentary, of course, differs depending on the particular context. ʿAṭṭār's poetic version resembles more closely the prose example cited previously in Chapter 2[142] with its paucity of detail, in contrast to the more amplified version of Sanāʾī. Nor does ʿAṭṭār place quite as much emphasis as Sanāʾī on Iblīs' claim to have been victimized by Jesus' plundering his goods. Especially the critical detail about his inability to retrieve his stolen property because Jesus possesses the divine gift of immunity, which is accorded all prophet-saints in Islam, is totally absent. However, ʿAṭṭār joins Sanāʾī in directing the thematic focus of the tale towards a condemnation of the world, with little evident concern for Iblīs' role as *shaykh* and counsellor to Jesus.

> Jesus, son of Mary, had fallen asleep,
> and had put half a brick under his head.
> When Jesus opened his eyes after his restful sleep,
> he saw the accursed Iblīs above his head.
> He cried, 'O accursed one, why stand you there?'
> He replied, 'Because you have placed my brick under your head!

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[138] *Ibid.*, p. 393 l. 11-12.
[139] *Ibid.*, p. 393 l. 13-14.
[140] *Ibid.*, pp. 393 l. 15-394 l. 8. The translation is of p. 394 l. 3, 5-6.
[141] See ʿAṭṭār, *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr*, pp. 132 l. 17-134 l. 4; *Muṣībatnāma*, p. 179 l. 1-9.
[142] See Ch. 2, p. 90.

The whole world is like my domain;
it is clear that this brick belongs to me.
You are appropriating goods in my kingdom;
you have trespassed in my territory.'
Jesus hurled that thing from beneath his head;
he resolved to sleep with his face on the ground.
When he (Jesus) flung that half brick away, Iblīs said,
'Now that I leave your presence, sleep well!'[143]

In the *Muṣībatnāma*, ʿAṭṭār's commentary is concise and to the point. Since death is man's ultimate fate, and the tomb his final resting place, what value is there in occupying one's time with the creation of an earthly paradise that will eventually crumble to dust? It is from the tears and lifeblood of the heart that the mortar and bricks of a lasting home are molded, not from the world's materiality.[144]

The *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr*, in contrast, contains a commentary that is longer than the fable itself. However, the gist is the same: the world is enticing but deadly, a novice easily gets caught in its web. Those who find themselves at home in the world are like the Old Testament figure Korah, who was known for his wealth and avarice, or like Pharaoh, Nimrod, and Shaddād, whose pride, arrogance, and tyranny epitomize the qualities of the depraved human spirit.[145]

Recalling a familiar Sufi image of the world[146] ʿAṭṭār describes it as a rotting corpse, carrion for unmanly predators.[147] Or again, he calls it a raging fire that attracts the innocent moth-soul with its light, only to consume the soul instantaneously in its flame. Fire can be fought only with fire; therefore, the *nafs* must be subjected to the fire of asceticism if the raging world-fire is to be extinguished. Only in passing through the flame of purification does the Sufi discover hope of victory for the soul.[148]

It is noteworthy that neither Sanāʾī nor ʿAṭṭār develops in his commentary the other major theme that seems an integral part of this meeting between Jesus and Iblīs, namely, the theme of Iblīs' victimization. Jesus, in all the versions of this tale, is accused of thievery and trespass. In Sanāʾī the theme is developed a step further: Iblīs is helpless to retaliate against Jesus, who has invaded his territory and appropriated his goods, because Jesus enjoys special protection from God arising from his prophetic office and his role as exemplar of the spiritual life.

An analysis of this theme is important, however, because of the light it sheds on the relationship between Iblīs and mankind, especially the

[143] ʿAṭṭār, *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr*, pp. 132 l. 17-133 l. 5. See also *Muṣībatnāma*, p. 179 l. 1-9.
[144] ʿAṭṭār, *Muṣībatnāma*, p. 179 l. 8-9.
[145] ʿAṭṭār, *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr*, p. 133 l. 6-13.
[146] See Ch. 2, p. 70.
[147] ʿAṭṭār, *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr*, p. 133 l. 14-19.
[148] *Ibid.*, pp. 133 l. 20-134 l. 4.

culpability each incurs through this relationship. One way to help clarify the issue is to examine another Sufi tale that is clearly related to the above story of Jesus and Iblīs. Its advantage is that it develops and explains Iblīs' role as victim with far greater precision, and does not restrict itself simply to an energetic condemnation of the evils found in the material world.

One version of this tale is found in the *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr* of ʿAṭṭār; however, there, it is presented in such a bare, skeletal fashion, that it is inadequate for the purposes of this inquiry.[149] We must turn to Ibn ʿArabī's *Rūḥ al-quds* for a more thorough treatment of the fable and its thematic content.

> A man came to our master Abū Madyān—may God be pleased with him!—and said, 'O master, Satan is troubling me. Perhaps you would drive him away from me.' The *shaykh* replied to him, 'Before your arrival, Iblīs already complained to me about you!' The man asked, 'What did he say to you?' The master answered, 'He said to me, "O *shaykh*, you know that God created the world for me, and He made it my snare and my trap. He granted me dominion over it, but someone has come along to infringe on my rights and to take from it what is mine. I ran after him to demand my rights from him. By God, I have not pursued men indiscriminately nor sought out any one of them. I have not left my own realm; I guard my garden and my goods. But he who has taken from there what is mine, him I have followed in order to demand my rights. And I knew that so and so would complain about me to you, so I followed after him and I have told you the whole story. As for me, I will not relinquish what is my due from him. I will snatch away whatever I can from his religion; or else let him return my goods to me like the ascetics did, and the adepts. It is for this

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[149] *Ibid.*, pp. 131 l. 9-132 l. 5.

The sparseness of ʿAṭṭār's version will be evident once it is compared with the text of Ibn ʿArabī. ʿAṭṭār reads as follows:

> A foolish fellow went before a spiritual director
> and complained loudly of Iblīs.
> He said, 'Iblīs leads me astray by his deception;
> he corrupts my religion with his imposture.'
> The sage replied to him, 'O noble fellow,
> Iblīs was here a little while ago, too.
> He was annoyed and complained about you,
> and poured dirt on his head because of what he endured at your hand.
> He (Iblīs) said, "The whole world is my domain,
> but he who is an enemy of the world does not belong to me.
> You, tell him, 'Get going on your way!
> hands off my territory!'
> Because he has started this fierce battle in my world,
> I resolve to do violence to his religion.
> Hands off my territory,
> and I will have nothing to do with any of you!
> Whoever stays completely outside of my domain,
> him, I will leave alone, and so be it!" '

reason that God said, 'As for My servants, you have no power over them.' I have no charge against them, nor any right, for they abandoned my goods. But this fellow infringed on my rights.'' '

'Whoever acts unjustly against you, act unjustly against him in the same way that he acted unjustly against you. So who is the evildoer?' The man replied, 'I am.' The *shaykh* said to him, 'Return to him his world, and he will return to you your hereafter.'[150]

This tale of Abū Madyān and Iblīs, and the related tale of Jesus and Iblīs, especially as told by Sanāʾī, reflect a strain of the Iblīs tradition that affirms his obedience and submission while downplaying any real moral culpability on his part. God created the world and commanded Iblīs to take charge of it, with all its deceptions and enticements to evil; Iblīs acquiesced to God's will and now acts as His agent. He does not force men to embroil themselves in the temptations of the world; on the contrary, Iblīs spends most of his time playing the role of guardian-steward, watching over this earthly garden that has been entrusted to his care. It is man who is the interloper, man who freely chooses to encroach upon Iblīs' domain to steal away his worldly goods. ''Who is the evildoer?'' asks the *shaykh*; it is man and no one else.

This theme is reinforced further by references to the detachment, perfection, and resulting inviolability of the great Sufi saints. They are the ones who have divested themselves of any trace of Iblīs' *dunyā*, and, consequently, they are the ones most able to reduce Iblīs to the abject state of victimhood, because he no longer possesses weapons potent enough to combat the level of their holiness.

Iblīs' outrage at Jesus' appropriation of the brick is, therefore, understandable given this particular perspective on both his and Jesus' cosmic roles. Jesus, here, is toying with a realm of existence that, supposedly, he has completely renounced. Is it not unfair that he, who is impeccable and beyond the reach of Satan's power, avails himself of Satan's goods without paying the price, i.e., without allowing the possibility of his succumbing to the temptations of the world?

Judging from these mythic fables, the rules of the spiritual life in this regard are clear: the Sufi saint who has achieved a high level of perfection and attained to virtual inviolability must, at the same time, return to Iblīs the goods of the world that are Iblīs' due. And once having returned these goods, the Sufi adept must never again meddle with them, for he and they are now parts of opposing realms of spiritual existence. To act in any way as if these two worlds are compatible is to perpetrate a deception worthy of Iblīs himself.

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[150] Muḥyī ʾd-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, *Risāla rūḥ al-quds fī muḥāsabat an-nafs* (Damascus: Maṭbaʿat al-ʿilm, 1384 A.H.-1964 C.E.), p. 31.

3. *Iblīs: recapitulation of fundamental themes — II*

The recapitulation of the major strains of the Iblīs motif in the works of Sanāʾī and ʿAṭṭār would be incomplete without reference to Iblīs' predominant characteristic, pride, and its consequences for him and mankind.

> To the extent of your ability, do not make pride the pivot
> on which your life turns;
> see what pride did to ʿAzāzīl.
> It cut off the water of obedience from his stream,
> and drew forth a Nile of curses upon his face.[151]

No amount of obedient worship was able to neutralize the destructive power of Iblīs' pride. The merit of so many thousands of years was flung like ashes into the wind; his heart, which had for so long been the abode of divine contentment, was transformed into a vale of bloody tears and eternal suffering.[152] Because of one act of conceit, one neglectful deed, he was hanged ignominiously in a place reserved for bowing.[153] His refusal to make prostration before God's *khalīfa* earned him expulsion from Paradise, where he once stood in angelic splendor, and sent him, deformed and cursed, to wander the earth seeking to shed the blood of innocent men.[154]

> Self-boasting is Satan's profession;
> he who esteems himself little is truly a man.
> Satan said, 'I am better than Adam!'
> Without doubt he is accursed until Resurrection Day.
> Man was fashioned from clay because of its humility;
> that creature of fire and light was lost because of his pride.
> Iblīs was banished because of his overweening pride;
> Adam was welcomed because he sought forgiveness.
> Adam was ennobled when he repented;
> Satan was humiliated when he boasted.
> A grain falls to the ground; people rush to pick it up.
> When an ear of corn raises high its head, they cut it down.[155]

The whole of Iblīs' pride is encapsulated in the one word "I", the symbol of his narcissistic preoccupation with his own superiority. His "I" so distorts his spiritual vision that he sees all reality as a reflection of

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[151] Ḥakīm Abū ʾl-Majd Majdūd Ibn Ādam Sanāʾī Ghaznavī, *Mathnawīhā-yi Ḥakīm Sanāʾī*, ed. Mudarris Raḍawī (Tehrān: Intishārāt-i dānishgāh-yi Tehrān, 1348 A.H. solar-1969 C.E.), p. 105 l. 260-261.

[152] ʿAṭṭār, *Asrārnāma*, p. 6, l. 96-100. See also *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr*, p. 107 l. 9.

[153] ʿAṭṭār, *Dīwān*, p. 472 l. 9005.

[154] Sanāʾī, *Dīwān*, p. 263 l. 2-4. See also ʿAṭṭār, *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr*, p. 9 l. 12-16.

[155] ʿAṭṭār, *Pandnāma*, pp. 38 l. 11-39 l. 7 of the Persian text.

himself.[156] For Iblīs to love, he must love himself; for him to seek God, to seek an Other who is beyond himself, is impossible because of the self-centered "I" that dominates his spirit. It is this proclamation of "I" that links Iblīs and Pharaoh as spiritual brothers, for Pharaoh, too, proclaimed himself lord above all beings and placed himself on a par with the Almighty.[157]

Iblīs is not only the author of the sin of "I", he is also, as indicated previously, the one who warns the faithful against succumbing to this same temptation.[158] ʿAṭṭār, too, perceives these two sides of Iblīs' personality. In contrast to the Iblīs who arrogantly shouts the "I" of self-divinization, he presents us with Iblīs, the counsellor, who, like a devoted *shaykh*, carefully guides the novice through the forest of self-delusions that springs from the fertile soil of pride.

God Most High spoke in secret to Moses,
'Go, seek guidance from Iblīs.'
When Moses espied Iblīs upon the road,
he expressed his wish to receive guidance from Iblīs.
He (Iblīs) said, 'Always remember this one bit of advice,
never say "I" lest you become like me.'[159]

In addition to offering good counsel, Iblīs, the *shaykh*, attempts to confront his comrade, Pharaoh, with the presumptuousness of his own claim to divinity. ʿAṭṭār describes an occasion when Iblīs approached Pharaoh with a handful of sand which he, Iblīs, proceeded to transform into a shower of pearls:

He (Iblīs) said, 'Take this sand and you, too, make a pearl.'
He (Pharaoh) replied, 'I do not know anything about this sort of thing.'
Then Iblīs, the accursed, opened his mouth
and said, 'You, with such pompous airs!
If I show my ugly face, you play the beggar.
Under what pretext do you make yourself God?'[160]

Instead of attaining God-like stature, the prideful man can only hope to become another Iblīs,[161] wallowing in his own selfishness and vanity.[162] Like a deformed Satan, he takes on the characteristics of a dog; in fact he sinks to a state of ritual impurity lower than that of any canine

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[156] Sanāʾī, *Ḥadīqa*, p. 232 l. 8-11.
[157] See Sanāʾī, *Makātīb*, p. 113 l. 4-6; *Ḥadīqa*, p. 4.
[158] See Ch. 2, p. 93.
[159] ʿAṭṭār, *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr*, p. 195 l. 11-13.
[160] ʿAṭṭār, *Muṣībatnāma*, pp. 184 l. 9-185 l. 14. The translation is of p. 184 l. 3-5.
[161] Sanāʾī, *Makātīb*, p. 115 l. 3-4.
[162] ʿAṭṭār, *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr*, p. 192 l. 17.

scavenger.[163] This deformation does not, however, impair Iblīs' intellectual faculties; quite the contrary.[164] ʿAṭṭār speaks of the boundlessness and immeasurability of Iblīs' knowledge,[165] while Sanāʾī dwells on the profundity of Iblīs' insight into the religious life of faithful Muslims.[166]

Iblīs possesses knowledge, not for true achievement,
but for the sake of boasting and deception.
The devil knows better the value of your religion,
since he provides enticements to seize your religion.
You, O ass, are more contemptible than Iblīs,
because you are a religion seller, and he a religion buyer.
Since you are hung up in his snare,
you flee from God and his messenger.
Whoever gets drunk on his (Iblīs') talk,
no one sees him sober for all eternity.[167]

The expansion of Iblīs' knowledge produces an opposite result in his victims; their reason dulls and they stagger mindlessly after their new master.[168] With eyes, as Sanāʾī describes, anointed with the collyrium of ignorance, they drink freely from the honeyed wine of indolence supplied by Iblīs.[169] These people can no longer be relied upon to witness to the truth; they stand dumbfounded in the face of Iblīs' deceptions.[170]

He who seeks ruse and fraud from Iblīs,
what worth does he acknowledge in Idrīs?[171]

Sanāʾī suggests that, to revive the moribund intellect, the novice must reshape it in the image of the holy companion of the prophet, Salmān, and thereby vanquish once and for all the devil of the heart by forcing him to submit to Islam.[172] ʿAṭṭār, in turn, counsels the Sufi to listen attentively, not to the whisperings of Satan, but to the whisperings of God about the secrets hidden in the Divine Mind that contain the key to an understanding of man's destiny and his spiritual origin.[173]

If you grasp the meaning of your origin, you will be king;
if not, you will be like a devil, like Satan himself.[174]

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[163] Sanāʾī, *Mathnawīhā*, p. 105 l. 256-257.
[164] See Ch. 2, pp. 79-80.
[165] ʿAṭṭār, *Lisān al-ghayb*, p. 33 l. 2.
[166] Sanāʾī, *Dīwān*, p. 200 l. 3-4. See also ʿAṭṭār, *Ushturnāma*, p. 170 l. 2.
[167] Sanāʾī, *Ḥadīqa*, p. 322 l. 5-9.
[168] ʿAṭṭār, *Lisān al-ghayb*, p. 152 l. 5.
[169] Sanāʾī, *Ḥadīqa*, p. 3.
This conviction that Satan makes fools of the ignorant and indolent, and manipulates their lives, is shared by many Sufi writers. See Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, pp. 252, 329; ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:11 #13, 1:32 #34; *Tamhīdāt*, pp. 75-76 #105.
[170] Sanāʾī, *Makātīb*, p. 60 l. 1-3.
[171] Sanāʾī, *Ḥadīqa*, p. 260 l. 16.
[172] *Ibid.*, p. 300 l. 15-16.
[173] See ʿAṭṭār, *Maẓhar al-ʿajāʾib*, p. 110 l. 2453, p. 180 l. 4053; *Dīwān*, p. 420 l. 7969.
[174] ʿAṭṭār, *Maẓhar al-ʿajāʾib*, p. 21 l. 468.

Knowledge of the secret of origin is not allied to the apparent superiority of one created essence over another, as Iblīs sadly discovered when he touted his fiery essence over the clay of Adam's fragile body. His proud fire mourns now in anguish because of the nobility of that humble dust;[175] the Sufi should learn from Iblīs' plight that it is better to bow, unquestioningly, before Adam the just, rather than to doubt and rebel.[176] Despite the bravado of his fire, Iblīs possessed an adolescent spirit in contrast to the mature spirit of Adam;[177] why then abandon Adam to join the immature sensualists who follow Iblīs?[178]

Both Sanāʾī and ʿAṭṭār enjoin the traditional virtues of the ascetical life upon the Sufi wayfarer, as a tried and true means of coping with the satanic elements of human existence. Repent, and you will be secure, otherwise you will be of less worth than a dog's corpse;[179] practice poverty and you will have nothing to fear from Satan's taunts. His shouts are merely the signs of his frustration and envy at your progress.[180] Detach yourself from the world and live as a solitary wanderer;[181] make your resting place among the ruins, seek not the fame and recognition of men if you desire true humility.[182] Far from being a joyless task, the way of asceticism enkindles within the soul an ardent longing for more intimate encounters with God. It is the ever present consciousness of this relationship of lover and Beloved that wipes away any pain or grief suffered by the Sufi on the ascetical Path.

Be thankful, O lover, because you possess a Beloved.
Come out now, happily, from inside your shell.
Since you have Him for Beloved, do not grieve;
but beware, eat not the morsel proffered by humanity,
Eat not the morsel like the people of temporality,
lest you become afflicted, like Satan.
If you would eat, eat the morsel prescribed by the Beloved,
so that a hundred moons and suns arise from your body.[183]

There is no need for discouragement; have confidence in the love God offers and muster your strength for an attack on Satan's citadel to free yourself once and for all from his power.[184] Whoever shares the Beloved's

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[175] Sanāʾī, *Dīwān*, p. 166 l. 9.
[176] *Ibid.*, p. 675 l. 2.
[177] Sanāʾī, *Ḥadīqa*, p. 722 l. 9.
[178] Sanāʾī, *Makātīb*, p. 40 l. 9-10. Repeated on p. 124 l. 4-5.
[179] ʿAṭṭār, *Lisān al-ghayb*, p. 87 l. 8, p. 88 l. 1.
[180] Sanāʾī, *Dīwān*, p. 174 l. 9-17.
[181] *Ibid.*, p. 299 l. 10.
[182] *Ibid.*, p. 506 l. 3-5.
[183] ʿAṭṭār, *Lisān al-ghayb*, p. 46 l. 19-22.
[184] See ʿAṭṭār, *Maẓhar al-ʿajāʾib*, p. 51 l. 1165, p. 63 l. 1438, p. 107 l. 2402-2403, p. 122 l. 2718; *Pandnāma*, p. 63 l. 3 and p. 96 l. 12 of the Persian text.

affection, acquires thereby a steadfast faith. Such a faith, grounded in love, will be the Sufi's most potent weapon against Iblīs.[185] Conversely the man whose faith is lukewarm and fickle cannot hope to survive the battle;[186] he will wander the Path, blindly, finally dying in Satan's grip.[187]

> Do not bestow a robe of honor on the Jonahs of your body, no, do not;
> do not throw the Josephs of your religion into the well or in prison.
> . . . . . .
> If you sell honest Joseph to Satan,
> when you pull him out of the well, do not make his price cheap.
> Today you are buying the Canaanite Joseph's body;
> do not traffic, however, with the Joseph of your faith, like bread.[188]

The Beloved will not tolerate a halfhearted response from the Sufi; an authentic commitment to the Path must entail single-minded dedication. Sanāʾī advises the *murīd* to drink so much wine of love that he will be too drunk to place his foot off the true Path. Were he to stray, Sanāʾī warns, drunkenness of a totally different sort would overcome him, the drunken stupor of Satan.[189] ʿAṭṭār, too, perceives the ambivalence of the drunken state; it need not always be a sign of the intoxication of love, but can as easily proclaim one's commitment to the world of unbelief and the abandonment of all that is godly.[190]

The Sufi who succeeds in losing himself in the love-embrace of mystic union has, as noted earlier, attained an enviable position with regard to his dealings with Iblīs. No longer will he be prey for Iblīs the hunter; the roles are now reversed and it is the proficient mystic who victimizes the pathetic Iblīs.[191] According to ʿAṭṭār, the holy caliph ʿUmar would, when annoyed, simply stick his fingers in Iblīs' eyes.[192] Whoever has cast the world from himself, be he caliph or beggar, has reduced Iblīs to slavery.[193] ʿAṭṭār tells the story of a renowned *shaykh* who fell asleep in the

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[185] ʿAṭṭār, *Maẓhar al-ʿajāʾib*, p. 221 l. 4957. Similarly on p. 121 l. 2699.

[186] *Ibid.*, p. 163 l. 3665-3672.

[187] *Ibid.*, p. 48 l. 1087.

[188] Sanāʾī, *Dīwān*, p. 507 l. 4, 8-9.

[189] *Ibid.*, p. 432 l. 9.

[190] See ʿAṭṭār, *Lisān al-ghayb*, p. 13 l. 1-2, p. 30 l. 14-15; *Ilāhīnāma*, p. 291 l. 7-9. ʿAin Al-Quḍāt describes the drunken man as the bride of Satan. He takes on female characteristics and forfeits forever the name of "man". See ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 2:230 #345.

[191] This theme occurs throughout the writings of Sufi *shaykhs*, regardless of the particular stance each takes vis-à-vis the Iblīs tradition. In addition to the material presented in Ch. 2, see ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, *Nāmahā*, 1:426-427 #713; Al-Baqlī, *Mashrab al-arwāḥ*, p. 314 l. 14-18; Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, p. 379.

[192] ʿAṭṭār, *Asrārnāma*, p. 16 l. 229.

[193] ʿAṭṭār, *Lisān al-ghayb*, p. 181 l. 14.

mosque. Another worshipper caught sight of Iblīs and asked him what business he had in a house of prayer:

> The accursed one replied, 'I continually desire, even this very moment,
> to divert the ignorant man from the Path.
> But I have neither the strength nor the ardor,
> because I am terrified of that wise man who is asleep.
> If that wise man did not have me hobbled,
> that ignorant man would be like wax in my hand.[194]

What is most significant, however, is not the power latent in mystic perfection to ward off Iblīs; far more critical is the power of mystic love to transform the Sufi who has been caught up in its embrace. Sanāʾī encapsulates in a single verse this profound vision of love's transforming power, prefiguring at the same time Jalāl Ad-Dīn Rūmī's passionate lines a century later on this same theme:

> The tips of Your lashes, with every glance that flows down the road of love,
> bring forth Adam, Iblīs, and the unbeliever as Muslims.[195]

4. *Iblīs: the saving power of martyrdom*

The recapitulation of the major themes reflecting Satan's involvements with the religious lives of men and women does not alone hold the stage in Sanāʾī and ʿAṭṭār's works. Both authors, in addition, offer their own particular analyses of the ultimate significance of the critical events that are central to the Iblīs myth. It is apparent that neither one considers Iblīs to be simply a one-dimensional symbol of pure malice; both recognize that Iblīs' fate is the tragic fall of a figure of nobility and advanced spiritual development.

> He (Iblīs) said, 'In the beginning, for thousands of years, I
> drank deeply from this full cup of mine,
> Until in the end I turned the cup upside down,
> and the torment of the curse came out from under it.
> In the two worlds, from top to bottom,
> there is no place I have not made a bowing place.'[196]

For all this loyalty, Iblīs has only his disfigured form to show. He, who at first made the houris of Paradise his bed companions, now frequents

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[194] ʿAṭṭār, *Asrārnāma*, p. 78 l. 1247-1251. The translation is of l. 1249-1251.
Jāmī relates another story of the holy *shaykh* Abū Madyān (see above, pp. 160-161) based on the testimony of Ibn ʿArabī. In it Iblīs expresses his terrible frustration from trying to insinuate sinful *khawāṭir* into the psyche of Abū Madyān. He has as much chance of sullying Abū Madyān's soul, he explains, as does a man who tries to pollute the Mediterranean by urinating in it. See Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, pp. 527-528.

[195] Sanāʾī, *Dīwān*, p. 142 l. 14. See also Ch. 2, pp. 120-121.

[196] ʿAṭṭār, *Muṣībatnāma*, p. 241 l. 16-18.

devils in the baths.[197] Yet even in this state of degradation, ʿAṭṭār discovers within Iblīs' character remnants of his former virility and spiritual perfection. He describes him in terms reminiscent of ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, who accorded Iblīs the honor of chamberlain at the door of the Divine Presence for his loyalty and self-sacrifice.

He (Iblīs) said, 'Far off stood I, sword in hand;
I drive from that door whoever appears,
So no one loiters around that door.
In the whole world, that is my work, that and nothing else.
Far off stood I, two eyes like clouds,
because that face denies itself to me.
Far off stood I, yet I cannot abide that anyone else
behold that face for even a moment except me.
Far off stood I, for though I am on His Path,
I am not worthy of His threshold.
Far off stood I, (I turn) neither foot nor head from Him.
Since I am afire, it is better far away from Him.
Far off stood I, in a state of gloom because of separation,
because I do not possess the radiance of that union's intimacy.
Although I have been banished from His threshold,
I do not turn my head a jot from His Path.
Since the moment I set foot in the Friend's alley,
I have not looked in any direction but the direction of the Friend.
Since I am now intimate companion to the secret's meaning,
I will not look—not even the littlest bit—at anyone.[198]

Earlier we alluded in passing to the motivating force behind Iblīs' determination to remain loyal to his Beloved, according to ʿAṭṭār.[199] He interprets Iblīs' refusal to bow to Adam not only as an act of personal pride, but more significantly as a quest for knowledge, a desire to share the divine secret that has been hidden within the essence of Adam. When God ordered the angels to bow, it was to prevent their acquiring knowledge of this secret. Iblīs, however, spurred on by his obsessive love of God, refused to allow this unique opportunity to escape. He would possess the gnosis, no matter the cost.

On several occasions ʿAṭṭār analyzes Iblīs' longing for gnosis and its impact on his relationship with God.[200] The thrust of the argumentation appears to be derived from a passage of ʿAmr Ibn ʿUthmān Al-Makkī's *Ganjnāma* which ʿAṭṭār quotes in the *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'* and which he versifies and incorporates into the *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr*.[201]

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[197] *Ibid.*, p. 242 l. 1.
[198] *Ibid.*, p. 242 l. 9-18.
[199] See Ch. 2, p. 91, note 139.
[200] See ʿAṭṭār, *Ilāhīnāma*, pp. 134 l. 18-135 l. 3; *Ushturnāma*, pp. 28 l. 18-31 l. 2; *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr*, pp. 216 l. 5-217 l. 12; *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'*, pp. 452-453.
[201] See ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'*, pp. 452-453 and *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr*, pp. 216 l. 5-217 l. 12.

He (ʿAmr Ibn ʿUthmān Al-Makkī) said, 'When God breathed that pure soul
into the body of Adam made of water and clay,
He willed that the hosts of angels bow low,
lest they obtain any knowledge about the soul, or any hint.
He said, "O spirits of the heavens,
bow down before Adam this very moment!"
They all bowed their heads to the ground.
Assuredly not one beheld that mystery pure.
But Iblīs held back and spoke this word,
"No one will see a bow from me!
If they should cast my head from my body,
that would not be as painful to me as this bending the neck.
I know very well that Adam is not mere clay;
I would give my head to see this more wondrous secret, have no
fear!" '[202]

And so he does not bow, but seizes the treasure hidden away in Adam's essence. God rages at this thief who has lain in ambush to pillage His most guarded secret; yet the curse He lays upon Iblīs pales before the gnosis he has plundered.

'He said, "O Lord, grant a respite to this servant;
bestow a remedy upon this downcast soul."
God Most High replied, "Your respite is granted;
I have placed the collar of curse round your neck.
I will brand you with the name 'liar';
you will remain accused until Resurrection Day."
After that Iblīs said, "This treasure pure,
since it has been revealed to me, what fear I of curse?
Both that curse and that mercy are Yours;
that servant and that fate are Yours.
If my fate is the curse, no fear;
for every poison is there not an antidote?
When I, seeking mercy, beheld Your creation,
I rudely incurred Your curse.
Are not some destined for Your curse, like Your mercy?
I am the servant of the curse, one who is not humiliated." '[203]

The most extensive treatment by ʿAṭṭār of Iblīs' refusal to bow, however, is not in the two above-mentioned works, but in the *Ushturnāma* where ʿAṭṭār presents his most complex analysis of both the gnostic theme and the additional theme of Iblīs' fidelity to monotheistic worship. In fact this latter motif occupies the stage in the beginning and middle sections of the passage where it is linked, as it often is, with Iblīs' protestations of superiority over Adam's fragile form.

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[202] ʿAṭṭār, *Mantiq aṭ-ṭayr*, p. 216 l. 6-12.
[203] *Ibid.*, p. 217 l. 3-10.

The accursed Iblīs was created of fire and light;
Adam was created from the image of God, wrought in dust.
One can discover light in darkness,
but darkness in light goes undiscovered.
When ʿAzāzīl saw clay Adam,
immediately he gazed upon himself in his purity,
And he said, 'O Lord, I am created of light unalloyed;
this, You have made of useless clay. I speak the truth!'
(Whoever sees himself the center of attraction,
he is set apart from the pure state of Sufis.)
'I, who have spent so many years at Your threshold,
and have progressed along Your Path,
How will I bow to someone other than You?'
. . . . . .
'I will bow to no one but You for eternity,
whether You will accept me or drive me away.'[204]

Iblīs does not seem at all aware of the treasure hidden within Adam's essence; in fact God chides him for his ignorance and explains in detail the superior qualities of Adam, including his possession of the secret of secrets. God acknowledges that He has sown a seed within this clay form that grows in yearning for its sower. In addition to sowing this seed, God wills to shower His love on Adam's clay so that the seed may continue to flourish.[205]

At this particular juncture ʿAṭṭār begins to weave into the text language reminiscent of the *Ganjnāma*. God orders the angels to bow but Iblīs refuses:

They all placed their heads on the ground;
Iblīs the accursed, however, remained standing.
God Most High said, 'O spy of the Path,
how long will you stare at Adam?
Bow before Adam, O accursed one,
afterwards see in him all the secrets.'[206]

Iblīs, however, does not pursue the gnostic theme but rather reiterates his unswerving monotheism.

Iblīs replied, 'O God of the universe,
king of the manifest and hidden,
I will never bow to anyone but You.
I never see duality except as the One.
I have bowed before You for years,
always I obeyed Your august command.
I will not bow to another than You;
this word of command I will not obey.'[207]

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[204] ʿAṭṭār, *Ushturnāma*, pp. 28 l. 18-29 l. 1, 7.
[205] *Ibid.*, p. 29 l. 8-20.
[206] *Ibid.*, pp. 29 l. 22-30 l. 1.
[207] *Ibid.*, p. 30 l. 2-5.

God again interrupts to point out to Iblīs the foolishness of his position. There are not two before him, God explains, but only one, for the secret essence of Adam is from God Himself. And if Iblīs continues to refuse to bow, there is no alternative but that God tie the collar of curse around his neck and mark him with the name liar. In keeping with the gnostic theme, these threats ring hollow to Iblīs when compared with the prize he is about to win.[208]

After this Iblīs lay in ambush;
he saw the secret; he attained to the essence of Truth.
He said, 'This secret, at this very moment, is unveiled.
This hope was the object of all my designs!
To me Your curse is better than Your mercy;
all this mercy, how could it take the place of Your curse?
Whatever You desire, do. Pay no need to my talking,
because I am helpless in the face of Your speech.
That curse is Yours and that mercy is Yours;
that servant is Yours and that fate is Yours.
Your speech renders my heart unconscious;
from this pain it has been rendered senseless for eternity.'
O you who flee from your Beloved,
in His presence all is the same. So what is good and what is bad?[209]

From these brief selections, it is apparent that ʿAṭṭār has woven a variety of strains from the Iblīs saga into his poetic descriptions of Iblīs' critical encounter with Adam. This is especially evident in the passage from the *Ushturnāma* where Iblīs is both a devoted monotheist and at the same time plots to deceive God in order to seize the secret of divine gnosis. While these strains are often complementary, when they are woven into the same text, inconsistencies are bound to arise. ʿAṭṭār cleverly tries to overcome this difficulty in the selections presented by having Iblīs say that his whole plan from the beginning was to seize God's gnostic treasure. The entire first section of the story, however, clearly comes from the monotheistic genre of Iblīs' soliloquies where Iblīs always expresses negative views of Adam, precisely because he sees nothing in him but clay. To explain these protestations of monotheism as a feigning of ignorance to put God off the track and thereby prepare the scene for the theft of God's gnosis, does not deal adequately with the ideological contradictions. Nevertheless it is an ingenious attempt to integrate the various levels of the tradition.

Alongside these forceful descriptions of what Iblīs' unflinching willpower achieved, especially the acquisition of gnosis, ʿAṭṭār paints a violently contrasting picture of God's will, which is so pervasive in its

[208] *Ibid.*, p. 30 l. 6-14.
[209] *Ibid.*, p. 30 l. 15-21.

outreach that it nullifies the validity of anything any individual spirit may appear to accomplish on his own. In ʿAṭṭār's lengthy tale of the tragic fall of Adam and Eve, also in the *Ushturnāma*,[210] this theme predominates. There need be no logic, or even justice, in the unfolding of His divine plan; what matters is that the transcendent God will it. In this fact is its total justification.

> Whatever God wills comes to be in time;
> because of this mystery, without notice, body and soul came to be.
> Whatever God wills comes to be without doubt;
> the person who sees, knows; he alone.
> Whatever God wills He performs in power;
> know this, O ignorant fellow, if you are perceptive.
> Whatever God wills He performs without discussion.
> No matter how much you talk, there is no conversation at all.[211]

This frightening inability to resist before the power of the divine decree is not limited to the example of Adam's succumbing to the whisperings of Satan in Paradise, but it reaches back to the fall of Satan itself. In stark contrast, therefore, to the preceding vision of Iblīs the lover, who proclaims his monotheism and freely chooses destruction at the hands of his Beloved for the sake of the gnostic treasure, ʿAṭṭār speaks of an Iblīs who has been victimized by the divine decree, an Iblīs who, in his humiliation, passes his days lamenting the incomprehensibility of his fate and the anguish of his separation. An illustrative story appears in the *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ* where the renowned mystic Abū ʾl-Ḥusayn Nūrī is discovered seated with a man; both have been overcome with grief and an abundance of tears. Soon, however, the man leaves and Nūrī returns to his friends:

> 'Do you know who that man was?' They replied, 'No.' He said, 'It was Iblīs, and he was relating the story of his services and the tale of his fate. And he was lamenting the pain of his separation. And as you saw, he was weeping and I myself was weeping too.'[212]

Elsewhere ʿAṭṭār describes in greater detail the reminiscences of the once glorious Iblīs. In the *Muṣībatnāma* Iblīs attempts to gain access to the prophet's celestial dwelling. Eventually Gabriel allows him to enter so that he might have a chance to describe the torment of his separation. Iblīs recalls to the prophet the night of his Ascension and questions him about what he saw: The Throne of God, the secrets of the universe, etc.[213]

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[210] *Ibid.*, pp. 36 l. 3-39 l. 14.
[211] *Ibid.*, p. 36 l. 1-4.
[212] ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, p. 470.
[213] ʿAṭṭār, *Muṣībatnāma*, p. 244 l. 9-19.

He said, 'Did you see to the left of the Throne of God
the valley of iniquity, the black desert?'
He replied, 'I saw it; it was far from my path.'
He said, 'That plain was my place of assembly.'
He continued, 'Did you see that overturned flag?
That flag is mine, O guide.'
He added, 'Did you see the broken *minbar* (pulpit)?
Truly it was put there for this wretched soul.
That was my *minbar*, and I summoned an assembly;
I proclaimed myself gold and creatures copper.
Seven hundred thousand angels from a hundred thousand directions
came to rest under that *minbar*.
I recited to them the traditions from God;
I made acquaintance with them, one by one.
How was I to know that I was the alien?
that they were the wise and I the madman?
I supposed that I was the fortunate one;
I was unaware of the collar of "My curse!" '[214]

Perhaps the most striking image ʿAṭṭār employs to describe Iblīs' lamentations over the tragedy of his fate is that of flowing, black streams, which occurs in the *Ilāhīnāma*:

That incomparable man said, 'Upon a desert road,
I beheld two black streams flowing.
I followed the flow to discover what this water was
that was flowing along with such speed.
Finally, when I reached the side of a rock,
I saw Iblīs, fallen in the dust.
His two eyes were like two clouds flowing blood;
from each eye a stream of blood kept flowing.
Like rain he wept and made lament;
incessantly he spoke these words with an even voice:
"This tale is not about that face like the moon,
but about my own misfortune.
He does not accept my acts of obedience;
then He lays the fault on my own neck!
Upon whom else has such a tragedy ever fallen?
No one can recall anything like this, ever." '[215]

The most poetic gem of this genre of Iblīs literature is found in the poetry of Sanāʾī, who captures best the full flavor of Iblīs' tragic plight at the hands of God's unfathomable will.

With Him my heart was united in love and friendship;
my heart was nest to the Simurgh of love.
At my gate stood an army from the hosts of angels;
my rank was to be stationed by the Divine Throne.

[214] *Ibid.*, pp. 244 l. 20-245 l. 5. The lament of Iblīs continues until line 16.
[215] ʿAṭṭār, *Ilāhīnāma*, p. 129 l. 4-11.

But upon my path He lay the trap of His wiliness;
Adam was the bait in the middle of that trap.
He willed to make me the butt of His curse;
He effected what He willed; clay Adam was but the pretext.
I was the teacher of the angels in the heavens;
I set my hope in eternity on this Eternal One.
I have passed seven hundred thousand years in obedient worship;
thousands upon thousands of treasures were amassed from my obedience.
I had read upon the tablet that someone would be cursed;
I was suspicious of everyone; I didn't suspect myself.
Adam was created of clay, and I, from His pure light.
I cried, 'I am incomparable!'—and he was the incomparable.
The angels said, 'You did not bow even once.'
How could I have done it, for He had this laid out for me.
Come, O soul, and do not depend on your obedient deeds,
for this verse is meant to give insight to people of the present.
I understood the end to which we had come because of His decree.
Thereupon a hundred fountains flowed from my two eyes.
O you who are wise in the ways of love, I am sinless!
For (my) finding the way to their (Adam and Eve) side was not without leave.[216]

These contrasting views of Iblīs (the Iblīs who freely chooses perfect monotheism and seizes the divine gnosis vs. the Iblīs who is the victim of God's overpowering decree) do not, surprisingly, serve ʿAṭṭār and Sanāʾī as jumping-off points for more extensive discussions of freedom and predestination. ʿAṭṭār does not devote any space at all to the development of this aspect of the Iblīs tradition; Sanāʾī, however, does broach the problem on one occasion in the *Dīwān*:

What do you say about his refusal to bow?
Was he compelled or free to choose?
If he was able to choose, then God is impotent.
If he was impotent, then God is a tyrant.
Do not ponder about business that is not your business.
Travel not a road that is not your road.[217]

Rather than engage in a philosophical discussion whether or not Iblīs possessed any freedom of choice, ʿAṭṭār prefers to focus his energies on the mystical science of opposites which was developed so skillfully by Al-Ḥallāj and ʿAin Al-Quḍāt. He is especially concerned with the way this science touches upon Iblīs' understanding of his own curse. Because of the intensity of Iblīs' relationship with God, ʿAṭṭār believes that he does not interpret his curse as a negative encounter; it is, paradoxically, an experience of intimacy.

[216] Sanāʾī, *Dīwān*, pp. 871 l. 2-872 l. 1.
[217] *Ibid.*, p. 272 l. 15-17.

In that hour when Iblīs became accursed,
he opened his mouth in hymns of praise and glorification:
'A curse from You is a hundred times more wonderful
than if I turn my head from You toward others.
If, because of a blow, a dog should run far away from the door,
he would be forever separated from the bone.'
What will I say? When he (Iblīs) heard the curse,
all in tears because of that curse, he saw only Him.
Someone who had drunk pure wine for thousands of years,
(not a little, but cups filled to the brim he had drunk!)
How could he forget that pure wine
because of some dregs that he drank at the end?
Although he tasted the dregs of the curse,
in that curse he beheld only the Cupbearer.
Since he beheld that Cupbearer for thousands of years in the pure wine,
how, in the dregs, could be behold another than Him?
Since the curse was decreed from that threshold,
and since his name 'the accursed one' came from that Presence,
He did not see that to be bad or good;
he saw only this—that it came from His threshold.
Since that curse was his robe of honor from the threshold,
he accepted it heartily. That is the long and short of it.[218]

This gift of curse that Iblīs has received is not simply one gift from among the many God bestows on the adepts of the spiritual Path; it is superior to all others and possesses an unparalleled uniqueness.

You believe that His blow is free;
but thousands of years of obedience are its price.
Even if your obedience to Him be thousands of years old,
that is the price of only one hour's curse from Him.[219]

Many sought God's grace but Iblīs alone riveted his eyes upon God's wrath; this curse set him above all others in manliness and endowed him with power over the sons and daughters of Adam.

The curse appeared on no one else,
for he alone was capable of buying the curse.
Because it came from God, that curse was full of riches for him,
although to others it seemed like death.[220]

Iblīs explains in another passage of the *Ilāhīnāma* that the curse should be compared to the king's arrow. Undoubtedly the arrow terrifies the one at whom it is aimed, but the soul-target should rejoice that the king has deigned to gaze upon it.

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[218] ʿAṭṭār, *Ilāhīnāma*, p. 134 l. 1-11.
[219] *Ibid.*, p. 137 l. 14-15.
[220] *Ibid.*, p. 131 l. 17-18.

You, at this moment, are aware only of the arrow;
if you have eyes, look at the one aiming![221]

Iblīs' refusal either to diminish his loving devotion or abandon his self-sacrificing submission to the Beloved, influences in a significant way ʿAṭṭār's views on Iblīs' ultimate end. However, here, as in previous cases, ʿAṭṭār does not present one, coherent and systematic theory about Iblīs' rehabilitation; he merely echoes, to a greater or lesser extent, the several theories that already had found their way into the corpus of the Sufi religious literature of his day. In fact ʿAṭṭār presents clearly contradictory opinions; at times he condemns Iblīs to eternal punishment in Hell and declares him bereft of all hope of divine mercy;[222] at others he suggests that Iblīs' rehabilitation is a distinct possibility. This latter perspective, in its various forms, is what concerns us here.

One sign of hope is discovered, curiously enough, in the overwhelming power of God's divine will, the same will that so capriciously crushed Iblīs in its grasp. ʿAṭṭār describes a conversation between Ash-Shiblī and Iblīs in which Iblīs at first bemoans the loss of his former glories; however, he quickly moves on to more pertinent concerns:

My heart was filled with His glory;
I was a confessor of His unity.
Nevertheless, without cause, in spite of all this devotion,
He drove me from His threshold without warning.
No one of the creatures of the threshold had the courage
to ask, 'Why did You banish him so suddenly?'
So if He should, without cause, accept me back again,
it would not be strange, for it cannot be fathomed.
Since without cause I was driven away by Him,
I can also, without cause, be called back by Him.
Since in God's actions there is no how and why,
it is not right to abandon hope in God.
Since His anger decreed my being driven off,
it would not be strange if His grace called me back.
I do not know; O God, I do not know!
You know; You know what You will.
One You call with a hundred caresses,
another You drive away with a hundred blows.
. . . . . .

[221] *Ibid.*, p. 135 l. 17.
In both the *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ* and the *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr* ʿAṭṭār recounts the last moments in the life of Ash-Shiblī who was overcome with envy over Iblīs' curse. He burned with jealousy and vexation because he was about to die without having shared this wondrous gift from God. See *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, p. 636 and *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr*, pp. 217 l. 14-218 l. 12.

[222] See ʿAṭṭār, *Maẓhar al-ʿajāʾib*, p. 244 l. 5493-5494 and *Pandnāma*, p. 9 l. 8-9 of the Persian text, which reads:

The sea of Your grace is without limit,
only Satan is without hope of Your mercy.

Since, without cause, You bestow great wealth,
now, too, without cause, grant me this favor.
Since, without cause, You bestowed the gift of existence,
in the same way, without cause, drown me in Your generosity.
Since Your repose depends not on my suffering,
Your liberality depends on no cause.[223]

A second, and more compelling expression of the possible bases for Iblīs' rehabilitation focuses on the fact of Iblīs' role as instrument. The plight of Iblīs is compared to that of the Old Testament figure Benjamin, brother of Joseph of Canaan; he, too, was unjustly victimized when Joseph hid a cup in his saddlebag and then accused him of thievery. This manipulation of Benjamin by Joseph was not, however, without purpose since it put Joseph's brothers to the test, and led to the eventual reconciliation of the sons of Jacob. In the same way, the manipulation of Iblīs at God's hands results in his eventually being rewarded with the post of chamberlain at the door of the Divine Presence. There he waits, to scrutinize and test those who would enter. Without the approval of Iblīs, no one can pass. In this passage ʿAṭṭār mirrors very closely ʿAin Al-Quḍāt's perception of Iblīs:

Thus spoke that sainted man, 'In exactly
the same way (as with Benjamin) God dealt with Iblīs.
He drove him from the door, and for the sake of this secret,
He set him apart from the whole world by the curse.
If He robed him with the cloak of His anger,
it was to conceal him forcibly from the eyes of the world.
At this threshold he now stands continually,
holding in his hand the weapon of wrath.
Unless you first seek refuge from him,
you will not be able to set foot in the Divine Realm.
He is stationed at the door day and night for this purpose:
to seize those reprobates who appear there.
The touchstone to test men's worth is in his hand;
from East to West they pass before him in ranks.
Anyone who brings counterfeit money there,
Iblīs cuts him down on the spot with his sickle.
Thus speaks Iblīs to the owner of the money,
"O you who have stolen from me the prize for deception!
God, in half an hour, flung back in my face
my thousands of years of obedient worship;

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[223] ʿAṭṭār, *Ilāhīnāma*, pp. 376 l. 18-377 l. 7, pp. 377 l. 18-378 l. 2. Sanāʾī, too, affirms that Iblīs should not be written off as a total loss:

He announced the glad tidings of His mercy to Idrīs;
He made not hopeless His grace for Iblīs.

See Sanāʾī, *Ḥadīqa*, p. 200 l. 14.

Yet you who are all aglow because of one atom of obedience,
you appear before God! Have you no shame?
If the creatures of the world curse me,
the love in my soul diminishes not one atom.
But if someone should curse you,
in an hour you would collapse from your suffering."
From the first, be like the courageous men of the Path;
then, ready to sacrifice your soul, throw yourself before the King!'[224]

There is no doubt that ʿAṭṭār places his weight on the side of those favoring Iblīs' final rehabilitation, even though he does not himself opt for one single explanation of why or how this is to come to pass. His own particular stance seems best summarized in these two brief verses:

Although he has been driven off, he is not also hopeless;
his curse, it seems, is not eternal.
Although at this moment he is steeped in hopelessness,
he will pass his eternity in hopefulness.[225]

5. *Iblīs: the return to the One*

The theories thus far examined that posit the final restoration of Iblīs in glory are based on a firm belief in the power of God's merciful love and the innate nobility, moral uprightness, and spiritual perfection Iblīs demonstrated in his cosmic roles. One further theory merits attention; however, it approaches Iblīs' return to God's presence not from the perspective of the intrinsic worth he possesses, but out of metaphysical necessity. The Qurʾān commentary attributed to Ibn ʿArabī points the way most clearly in this regard,[226] with ʿAzīz Ad-Dīn Nasafī providing complementary additions. Finally, with ʿAbd Al-Karīm Al-Jīlī an interesting integration of the metaphysical theme with the themes of Iblīs' moral rectitude and loving dedication is effected.

In pseudo-Ibn ʿArabī's formulation of the psychology of the mystic life, the figure of Iblīs is equated with *wahm*, the power of imagination and self delusion.[227] The imaginative faculty, the text explains, is created

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[224] ʿAṭṭār, *Ilāhīnāma*, pp. 129 l. 16-130 l. 11. See also p. 137 l. 18-19:

If you possessed this manliness for an instant,
at every moment you could revive the world.
Although he was driven away and is the accursed of the Path,
he is always in the presence of the King.

[225] ʿAṭṭār, *Muṣībatnāma*, p. 244 l. 7-8.

[226] Osman Yahya, in his study of the oeuvre of Ibn ʿArabī, indicates that this commentary is most probably a work begun by ʿAbd Ar-Razzāq Kāshānī (†1330 C.E.) and later completed by one or more of his disciples. See Osman Yahya, *Histoire et classification de l'oeuvre d'Ibn ʿArabī*, 2 vols. (Damascus: Centre nationale de la recherche scientifique, 1964), 2:483-484.

[227] See Muḥyī ʾd-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1 and 2 (Beirut: Dār al-yaqaẓat al-ʿarabīya, n.d.), 1:39, 1:425.

from the subtlest part of the animal spirit, which is also the hottest spirit within the body. But this Iblīs-power is veiled from the more exalted perfections of the human spirit because of its basic animality and resulting inferiority. Nevertheless, imagination deludes itself with pretensions of self-worth and exaltation, rebelling in arrogance against the *ʿaql*, the pure Intellect.[228]

In his *Al-Insān al-kāmil*, Nasafī echoes much of pseudo-Ibn ʿArabī's perception of the Iblīs-*wahm* identity. He describes the creation of God's representative in the lower world (*ʿālam-i ṣaghīr*), an event parallel to the same creation that already occurred in the cosmic realm (*ʿālam-i kabīr*):

> Thereupon He sent His viceregent into the world of men. And God's regent was *ʿaql*, the Intellect. When *ʿaql* assumed the caliphate in the world of men, all the angels of the lower world bowed to Intellect, except *wahm*, Imagination, who did not bow. He refused. This was the same as when Adam, in the cosmic world, assumed the caliphate; all the angels bowed down to Adam except Iblīs who did not bow. He refused.[229]

In more traditional fashion than Nasafī, pseudo-Ibn ʿArabī describes the mythic origin and eventual downfall of the angel Iblīs-*wahm*. Iblīs is neither from among the pure angels on earth who are compelled to obey God's command, nor from those heavenly angels of Intellect who perceive Adam's nobility, acknowledge his Intellect, and obey God's command out of loving devotion. Iblīs is derived from Al-Jānn, the essence of fiery, animal spirit, and is, consequently, a member of the family of spirits called *jinn*.

However, Iblīs was brought up and educated among the heavenly beings, from whom he acquired partial knowledge and the ability to ascend into the realms of Intellect. But he deceived himself with self-boasting and refused to submit to the judgement of *ʿaql*. He proclaimed himself superior to clay creation and to the angels of both heaven and earth, thereby exceeding the limits of his partial knowledge. Iblīs' mad rush to penetrate the mysteries of *ʿaql* was doomed to defeat from the very

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[228] *Ibid.*, 1:425. See also 1:428.

[229] ʿAzīz Ad-Dīn Nasafī, *Le livre de l'homme parfait (Kitāb al-insān al-kāmil)*, ed. Marijan Molé (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1962), p. 143 l. 11-15.

A wide range of correspondences occurs in both pseudo-Ibn ʿArabī and Nasafī. They are not restricted to the Iblīs/*wahm*, Adam/*ʿaql* correspondences. There are, for example, Eve/*nafs*, Adam/*qalb* (Ibn ʿArabī, *Tafsīr*, 1:39-40); Eve/body, Ṭāwūs/desire, serpent/wrath (Nasafī, *Al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 149 l. 1-9). Nasafī even distinguishes between Ash-Shayṭān and Iblīs, associating a different reality to each: Ash-Shayṭān/envy, Iblīs/disobedience (p. 404 l. 15-18) or Ash-Shayṭān/nature, Iblīs/imagination (p. 149 l. 10-11). The *ʿaql*, too, is known under a variety of names: the first essence (*jawhar-i awwal*) created by God, spirit (*rūḥ*), light, pen, angel brought near, throne of majesty, etc. (pp. 398 l. 18-399 l. 9).

beginning, because, by nature, he was veiled from the fulness of Truth and destined to succumb to *qiyās*.[230]

This is not the only perspective Ibn ʿArabī offers on the composition of Iblīs' nature. Elsewhere he discusses it in the light of a particular Qurʾānic verse: "He said, 'O Iblīs, what prevented your bowing to one whom I created with *My own two hands*?' " (Qurʾān 38:75). Adam-*ʿaql* was created by God as a mixture of both earthly and divine forms, each represented by a hand of God. Iblīs, however, was not granted this composite nature; he is merely a fragment of earthly form. Adam, however, as God's viceregent, had to possess the form of Him whose representative he was, otherwise he would have no link with the one who appointed him to this office.[231] His nobility of essence raises Adam above all the creatures of creation, above even the purest of angels.[232]

Nasafī, in contrast, describes an elaborate cosmic construct of seven hells and eight paradises. The first paradise possessed no hell counterpart because it was a realm that lacked all complex created substances; only Adam and Eve existed there in precreated isolation. When God pronounced the creative word "Be!" Adam and Eve moved to the second paradise where they first encountered not only the goodness of creation, but also the power of evil. The crisis between Iblīs-*wahm* and Adam-*ʿaql* came to a head in the fourth paradise and symbolizes the submission of all spiritual and corporeal powers to *ʿaql*, all except Imagination which refused to submit.[233]

Nasafī makes an interesting observation about what constitutes the motivation for Iblīs' refusal. He is not evil by nature, or uncontrollably drawn to sin; rather he incurs blame because of his free choices: his prideful disobedience, his villainous deeds, and his corrupt teachings. Therefore, Nasafī cautions, any man who imitates these choices becomes satanic and Iblīs-like in the process.[234]

Nasafī explains that the power of choice is one single reality; when it is perverted through a choice for evil, it bears the name Iblīs. When, however, the choice is for the good, the power reveals itself as *malak*, the angel.[235] Referring to such illustrious predecessors as Saʿd Ad-Dīn Ḥamūyā and ʿAin Al-Quḍāt, Nasafī describes the angel as unveiler while

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[230] Ibn ʿArabī, *Tafsīr*, 1:39. See also 1:665-666, 1:765, 2:365-366.

[231] See Muḥyī ʾd-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. Abū ʾl-ʿAlā ʿAfīfī (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-ʿarabī, 1365 A.H.-1946 C.E.), p. 55, pp. 144-145.

[232] *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51, 145.

[233] Nasafī, *Al-Insān al-kāmil*, pp. 299 l. 10-301 l. 20.

[234] *Ibid.*, pp. 149 l. 19-150 l. 3.

[235] *Ibid.*, p. 150 l. 10-13.

Satan is the veiler; the angel incites to good and warns from evil while Satan incites to evil and deflects from the good.[236]

Even though both pseudo-Ibn ʿArabī and Nasafī paint rather bleak pictures of Iblīs' character, they both hold open the door for his eventual return to favor. Pseudo-Ibn ʿArabī believes that Iblīs' personal humiliation and his involvement in the seduction of the sons and daughters of Adam will continue only until the Day of Resurrection. This is the length of the respite God granted Iblīs so that he could take his revenge on mankind and, in the process, serve as God's instrument of judgement.

In pseudo-Ibn ʿArabī's scheme there are two resurrections, the minor or "little" resurrection, which entails the stripping of the *nafs* from the body by the cutting off of all attachments, and the final or "big" resurrection, which is the *fanāʾ* or passing away of all reality back into *tawḥīd*, the unity of the One.[237] This theory of resurrection illustrates clearly the metaphysical bias of the *Tafsīr* attributed to Ibn ʿArabī. At the final apocalyptic consummation of the universe, i.e., the final resurrection, all, whether good or evil, will be subsumed into the one, pantheistic reality who is God: "...and he (Iblīs) will not be accursed.... And both the respite to lead astray and the curse will come to an end at that time.'[238]

The powers of Iblīs to corrupt, limited as they were to those people who had given themselves over to the world, now, in the end times, are rendered null and void. "If he was totally unable to lead them (i.e., the faithful believers) astray in the beginning, how could he do it at the end?"[239]

Nasafī does not speak in such strongly metaphysical language as does the *Tafsīr*. However, he does describe the *ʿālam-i jabarūt*, the world of angelic hosts (which is the world immediately below the world of the Divine Presence), as the world of *waḥda*, unity, where opposites exist no longer.[240]

> O darvish! In the *ʿālam-i jabarūt* both honey and colocynth have the same taste; both the antidote and the poison are concocted in the same vessel; both the hawk and the hen live together; both the wolf and the sheep are

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[236] *Ibid.*, p. 403 l. 9-17.

[237] Ibn ʿArabī, *Tafsīr*, 1:666.

[238] *Ibid.*, 2:367.

[239] *Ibid.*

Even though pseudo-Ibn ʿArabī frees Iblīs from his curse, he still assigns him to Hell for all eternity (see *Tafsīr*, 2:367). However we would be wrong, as A. E. Affifi explains, to equate what the master Ibn ʿArabī himself meant by Hell with a traditional understanding of the term. Because of his metaphysical pantheism, Hell, too, is subsumed into the One at the end of time. Thus it is transformed into a Hell of eternal happiness. See A. E. Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyid Dīn Ibnul ʿArabī* (London: Cambridge University Press; reprint ed., Lahore: Muḥammad Ashraf, 1964), pp. 163-170.

[240] Nasafī, *Al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 178 l. 9-10.

> together; day and night, light and darkness have the same hue; eternity without beginning and eternity without end, yesterday and tomorrow abide in the same house; Iblīs has no enmity towards Adam; Nimrod and Abraham are reconciled; there is no quarrel between Pharaoh and Moses.[241]

Here Iblīs finds peace and the cessation of conflict. And in the absence of conflict, his pain of separation, too, disappears, for the world of *jabarūt* is the realm where individuality ceases.[242]

A further perspective on Iblīs' rehabilitation is formulated in the *Al-Insān al-kāmil* of ʿAbd Al-Karīm Al-Jīlī. The theory of origin he proposes for Iblīs differs from that of the previous two authors. All the angels in Al-Jīlī's schema were created by God from the *nafs* of the cosmic Muḥammad—the noble angels from the beauty, light, and right-guidance of Muḥammad's *nafs*, and Iblīs and his followers from the overpowering might, darkness, and straying of his *nafs*.[243]

In accord with the traditional accounts of Iblīs' prefall, mythic history, Al-Jīlī identifies him as ʿAzāzīl, an angel of single-minded devotion.[244] When God created Adam and ordered the angels to bow, the command appeared to ʿAzāzīl to be an exercise in equivocation. He did not realize that one who bowed to Adam in accordance with God's command was truly bowing to God Himself. Therefore he refused and earned the name Iblīs.[245]

When God confronts him with his disobedience and demands an explanation, Iblīs vaunts his essential superiority over clay Adam: "If you take a candle and turn it upside down, the flame still rises upward, in contrast to clay; for if you take a handful of dirt and throw it up in the air, it falls right back down."[246]

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[241] *Ibid.*, pp. 178 l. 18-179 l. 5.

[242] *Ibid.*, p. 178 l. 11-13, p. 179 l. 16-20.

[243] ʿAbd Al-Karīm Ibn Ibrāhīm Al-Jīlī, *Al-Insān al-kāmil* (Cairo: n.p., 1886 C.E.-1304 A.H.), p. 39.

[244] *Ibid.*

In general Al-Jīlī reflects much of the traditional theory about Satan's involvements in human life. After describing Iblīs' oath to waylay all of mankind except those whom God chooses to spare (pp. 40-41), Al-Jīlī provides a lengthy description of the seven principal manifestations Iblīs employs to accomplish his end: 1) the *dunyā* (explained in detail); 2) the desires of nature; 3) the manipulation of the good; 4) the corruption of pure intention; 5) the corruption of the wise through *ʿilm*; 6) leading the novice astray by perverting his desires for relaxation; 7) appearing to the gnostic in visions of glory and leading him astray (see pp. 41-43).

[245] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

Al-Jīlī distinguishes two groups among the angels. One group, the more noble, was created from divine light like the angel Nūn; the second group is composed of baser elements. This latter group of angels is the one God ordered to bow to Adam.

[246] *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

Al-Jīlī offers the opinion that Iblīs was not in a state of psychological expansion (*basṭ*) as

In spite of his curse, Iblīs does not show one ounce of regret nor does he beg forgiveness from God for his refusal. He is confident that God does only what He wills; in fact he is convinced that nothing can come to be without God's willing it. Who is he, therefore, to attempt to alter the will of God?[247] No, he will accept God's decree with joy.

> People say that when Iblīs was cursed, he was so excited and overcome by the intensity of his joy that he filled the whole world by himself. Some asked him, 'How can you act this way seeing that you have been driven from the Divine Presence?' He replied, 'By this robe of honor the Beloved has singled me out; neither an angel who has been brought near wears it, nor a prophet who has been sent forth.'[248]

Even in his joy, however, Iblīs must fulfill the requirements of his curse. God drives Iblīs away and isolates him from Himself; He stations him in the world like a scarecrow amidst the crops. Animals shrink from him in disgust; birds fly off in terror. Nevertheless, it is through his watchfulness that the crops are preserved.[249] Similarly in the created world, men and women come to know good and evil through their contact with Iblīs. Here again the paradox of opposites centers on him; it is only by knowing the ugliness and evil of the tempter that one can recognize the beauty and goodness of the fruits of the divine realm. This is but a variation of the theme so well developed by ʿAin Al-Quḍāt.

Iblīs obediently fulfills his duties during the respite God grants; this is what has been decreed for him since the time of his creation. But there is more to God's decree for Iblīs than curse and separation. Al-Jīlī affirms that this state will last only until the final apocalypse when the spirit of Iblīs will be clothed again in all its perfections, including intimacy with the Divine Lord.

> Then Iblīs will return to the divine intimacy he possessed in God's presence. And this will come to pass after the disappearance of Hell, for everything created by God will inevitably return to what it possessed. That is a fundamental principle that has been decided, so take note![250]

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some would hold (see, for example, Al-Baqlī, *Mashrab al-arwāḥ*, pp. 185-186). If he had experienced the state of expansion, not only would he have proclaimed his own superiority, but, more importantly, he would also have boasted of his dedication to monotheism in response to God's question about the reason for his refusal to bow. In addition he would have realized from his name change that he had succumbed to deception, and he would have repented. These lapses appear to Al-Jīlī as indicative of the psychological state of *qabḍ*, contraction, rather than of *basṭ*, expansion (p. 40).

[247] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

[248] *Ibid.*

[249] *Ibid.*

[250] *Ibid.*

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

1. *Summary*

The previous three chapters portray vividly the role the figure of Iblīs has played in the evolution of Muslim religious life, especially in Sufism. Several parallel strands of the Iblīs motif were isolated and identified, yet no one perspective appeared to predominate or stifle the continued interaction among the various strains of the tradition.

The legend of Iblīs originates in the heart of the Islamic revelation, the Qurʾān, where the seeds of Iblīs' mythic biography are sown in the dramatizations of his refusal to bow before Adam, and his subsequent seduction of Adam and Eve. The debates that were sparked by the exegesis of these Qurʾānic passages placed in question Iblīs' origin: was he angel or *jinn*? Or are they, in fact, two names for the same cosmic reality? Although the results of the debate were inconclusive, in the process of discussion much light was shed on the nature of spiritual beings in Islam and the functions they and their progeny assume in the lives of the Muslim faithful.

The consequences Iblīs suffered because of his refusal to make prostration before the newly created Adam testify to the danger any Muslim faces when he relies solely on intellect and reasoning, especially on the tool of analogy, *qiyās*. When *qiyās* is coupled with a prideful spirit, the combination is fatal, viz., Iblīs' humiliation. No more than a dim recollection of his former glory survived his arrogant proclamation of superiority; Iblīs' only comfort was God's merciful decision to grant him respite until the Day of Judgement.

Iblīs put this time of respite to efficient use and carefully executed his revenge on Adam and Eve by enticing them to eat from the forbidden tree. This climactic encounter was not, however, to end the relationship between Iblīs and mankind. Every human person, affirms the *ḥadīth*, is pricked by Satan at birth; moreover, Satan flows in each man's bloodstream. Thus the struggle between Iblīs and Adam is relived in every man and woman's conflict with the satanic forces in creation.

In addition, the *ḥadīth* literature outlines in detail Satan's intricate involvements with human praxis: he permeates man's psychic life and interferes with the performance of all types of actions, ranging from ritual prayer to eating and personal hygiene. Satan's overpowering presence in the world is daily confirmed on a cosmic scale by the appearance of Satan's horns, i.e., the two shafts of light between which the sun rises

and sets. Hope for the faithful resides only in seeking refuge from Satan in God's merciful protection.

The Sufis assimilated much of the mythic lore that had grown up around Iblīs, but they emphasized only those aspects of his history that addressed their religious concerns. For example, the Sufis' preoccupation centered not on whether Iblīs was angel or *jinn*, nor on the ways he reproduced; their concern focused on the fact that Iblīs and his children lived and multiplied in men's hearts, thereby insinuating themselves into the fibers of man's very being. Every person possessed a malevolent spirit, Muḥammad being no exception. Gaining control over this satanic force required strict training in the ascetical life.

The violent struggle between God and Iblīs in man's inner core became the object of careful analysis by Sufi masters. They endeavored to fortify the inexperienced *murīd* with adequate knowledge, that he might be able to discern accurately the movements of the conflicting spiritual forces within his soul. The heart (*qalb*) was the arena for this combat between God, assisted by His *malak*, and Iblīs, assisted by the *nafs*; the principal weapons employed by both sides were the *khawāṭir*, the impulses to good and evil that flood the human spirit.

Many of these *khawāṭir* appeared morally ambiguous; consequently it was important to help the Sufi wayfarer divine the source of a particular impulse, whether it be the action of God's grace or the seductive whisperings (*waswasa*) of Satan. Only then could the novice extricate himself from the morass of confusing and conflicting desires.

Iblīs' stratagems are not confined to the interior arena of the *qalb*; the seductions fostered by the external world of senses are endowed with equal, if not superior, potency. The webs Iblīs weaves to ensnare the human soul in the *dunyā* are legion: passion, gluttony, anger, sloth, ritual impurity, divisiveness, etc. Once again the faithful Sufi has no recourse but to turn to the power latent in sacred word, and to rely on God's assurances of merciful protection. Nevertheless, even these will prove ineffective if the novice does not cultivate a spirit of detachment from all created things, thus curbing the power of the *nafs*, and turn all his attention to the quest for intimacy with God.

The most frightening manifestations of Iblīs, however, are his manipulations of the good, for he is an expert in the Law and conversant with all the stations and states that lead to mystical union. The role Iblīs favors most is that of the deceiving friend or pseudo-*shaykh* who dupes the unsuspecting Sufi. Almost as lethal is his ability to appear in glorious splendor, seated upon a majestic throne in the guise of divinity, thereby to delude the gullible into believing they have had a vision of God.

On occasion Iblīs actually encourages one to perform good deeds, with the hope of preventing one's accomplishment of an even greater good. Thus he awakened Muʿāwiya from a sound sleep so that he would not miss the call to prayer, for Iblīs knew that Muʿāwiya's groans and laments over neglecting his duty would have gained him far more merit than the performance of the required *ṣalāt*. In the same way he tricked the holy man Barṣīṣā into responding to the lesser good, the sick young girl, and set the stage for the monk's eventual corruption and damnation.

Ironically, however, Iblīs' toying with good deeds creates situations in which he actually assumes the authentic role of spiritual counsellor, seemingly with no ulterior motives. In these fables he reveals to Sufi practitioners his most effective snares—anger, desire, greed, gluttony, and the like—to forewarn them of the perils they will face upon the Path. Surprisingly, Iblīs points out to his arch-enemy, the prophet Jesus, a worldly attachment that he has not yet overcome, one which Jesus must put aside if he is to attain perfection.

Perhaps the most prominent characteristic of Iblīs for the spiritual writers of Islam is his all-consuming pride: "I am better than he!" The intoxication of the sin of "I" so corrupted Iblīs' soul that he placed himself in opposition to God, claiming independence over against the Almighty. This conceit of perfection, with its accompanying assertion of autonomy, transformed the loving servant into the arrogant narcissist whose passion for devotion was transmuted into blatant self-love.

The sin of pride, symbolized by the "I" of Iblīs, was recognized by Sufis throughout the ages as far more deadly to the spiritual life of the soul than any sin of human passion. Pride, they acknowledge, is clearly one of the capital sins of Islam.

An equally significant strand of the Iblīs tradition, however, refuses to portray the figure of Iblīs in such stark, negative terms. To appreciate the depth of his personality, some Sufis claim, one must consider seriously his protestations of innocence. These dramatic expressions by various Sufi writers of Iblīs' tragic predicament are important vehicles for the communication of critical insights into the relationship between free will and predestination, between God's transcendence and His *makr* (wiliness), and between the power of prophet-saints and Satan's power.

Iblīs' conviction that he is but an instrument of God's almighty power is the basis for his plea of coercion. He maintains that he acts only in accordance with God's will and that, therefore, he is unjustly accused of setting himself in opposition to God. But if everything that occurs in the cosmos is ultimately attributable to God's will, the Sufis ask, in what does man's freedom consist? Rūmī is in the forefront of those who refuse

to reduce man to an automaton. Nevertheless, the tension between God's transcendent will and man's freedom of choice is never fully resolved.

To those who do not accept his plea of coercion, Iblīs offers another explanation for his refusal to bow before Adam. He asserts that he is privy to the secrets of God's will, and God's will in this case is at variance with His command. He wills the response of perfect monotheism and yet commands prostration to another. This paradox is but a test of one's spiritual perspicacity, he concludes, and an opportunity to make use of the gift of freedom in order to participate in one's own salvation.

However, when faced with such a predicament, the Sufis advise: become neither a Jabrite nor a Qadarite, a believer neither in predestination nor unbridled human freedom. Do not choose one over the other, as Iblīs did, but accept the paradox that both God's will and His command must be accepted without question, even if they appear to man's finite intellect as contradictions.

God's will is the guiding force behind all that unfolds in the mythic history of Iblīs. At the times when Iblīs appears to be his most powerful, God reasserts His control by reducing him to a plaything in the hands of prophets and holy men. No evil, no matter how subtle or violent, can touch the souls of God's chosen ones. The impotence of Iblīs in the face of those to whom God has granted His gift of *ʿiṣma*, impeccability, should not, however, create unwarranted feelings of security in Sufis of lesser spiritual attainments. They are as vulnerable as before to Satan's wiles; upon them he continues to work his deceptions, luring their souls into the eternal fire.

An additional strain within the Iblīs tradition is nurtured by a group of Sufis who do not discount Iblīs' disclaimers nor condemn him for choosing to refuse God's command. These spiritual writers are the masters of the science of opposites, which entails the juxtaposition of conflicting spiritual realities in order to highlight particular aspects of the mystic life. For these Sufi theorists, Iblīs' plight is the perfect symbol of this method of spiritual expression. Because of the intensity of his contemplative love, Iblīs became the model of monotheistic devotion. This dedication to the monotheistic ideal, however, forced Iblīs to disobey the command to bow. God cursed him for his refusal and separated him from the Divine Presence. Yet because the Beloved had deigned to look upon him—even if the look was one of curse—Iblīs accepted his destruction like a martyr's crown.

The reward the condemned Iblīs earned from God for his loving self-sacrifice was the office of chamberlain at the door of the Divine Presence, where he separates the wheat from the chaff by testing the mettle of man's faith with the sword of God's own power. No one is permitted to

advance from *lā ilāh* to the realm of divine light, *illa ʾllāh*, without passing through the black light of Iblīs. For in the same way that Muḥammad reveals the light of God's revelation, so does the black light of Iblīs reveal the darkness of God's wrath.

The humiliation and separation that resulted from God's curse became the touchstones of Iblīs' mystic love; for him the curse was the food of life, and mercy seemed poison. Iblīs freely chose the pain of distance, conscious that separation was preferable because it was the fulfillment of the Beloved's desire and not of his own selfish wish. Separation and the curse, some Sufis caution, are prizes not easily won; they are attained only after years of strict obedience and worship. For Iblīs, aeons of perfect monotheism and ceaseless devotion were necessary before God singled him out to receive this most precious gift, reserved for His intimate followers alone.

These acknowledgements by Sufi writers of Iblīs' perfect self-sacrifice and martyrdom seem to go hand in hand with a very restricted affirmation of human freedom. Those Sufis who proclaim the glory of Iblīs' role as divine instrument, and its concomitant moral righteousness, ascribe all to the unfolding of God's will. Responsibility rests with Him; man's call is to accept humbly and lovingly what God metes out. The scope of man's freedom is limited to the general areas circumscribed by God's will. If one has been destined by God for salvation, then one's free choice holds sway among only those particular deeds that would positively advance one's progress towards this goal. And conversely, the man destined for Hell cannot, by freely choosing, change his ways and attain Paradise. To illustrate this point, Iblīs' refusal is mythically described as the culmination of a secret plan devised by God and known only to Him and Iblīs. This corroborates the assertion that Iblīs' refusal is but a preordained element of God's plan and not the rebellion of a creature who was previously destined for eternal reward.

The various strains of the Iblīs tradition rarely converge in the work of a single author. There are, however, exceptions, represented by ʿAṭṭār and, to a lesser extent, by Sanāʾī. Both recapitulate themes from the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* which describe Iblīs' pervasive influence in the world and in man's interior life. As before, prominence is accorded the far-reaching impact of the sin of "I". Equally noteworthy in their works are themes portraying the victimization of Iblīs by mankind. He appears as the much maligned instrument of God who allows himself to be manipulated by the divine will so that God's testing of mankind can proceed.

There is glory in martyrdom; consequently, the more tragic the depiction of Iblīs' destruction at God's hands, the more noble he appears. The

curse becomes Iblīs' unique badge of spiritual perfection, and, in enduring the torment of this curse, he discovers renewed hope of rehabilitation. For as God has, without cause, branded him a devil and subjected him to the pain of separation, so He can, without cause, invite him to share once again the divine intimacy. Iblīs must wait patiently for the call to return and resume his station as chief monotheist and master of the heavens.

The question of Iblīs' rehabilitation can be approached from a very different perspective. Instead of perceiving his restoration as the culmination of salvific martyrdom, it can be understood as the conclusion of a relentless, metaphysical monism. All, eventually, returns to the One, whether it appear as good or evil in the transient state of worldly existence. In this world view, Iblīs' rehabilitation is assured; however, the drama of his mythic history is vitiated in such a theory, because there need be little concern about the way he deals with the paradox of his curse. The final outcome of his existence will always be the same, return to undifferentiated *tawḥīd*.

2. *Conclusion*

It is rash to propose to encapsulate in a few concluding remarks the overall significance of the figure of Iblīs in Sufism. The phenomena thus far examined overwhelm any such attempt with their variety and diversity. Moreover, the range of this study does not reach far beyond the sixteenth century, and is further limited to selected Sufi texts in Arabic and Persian. There remain quantities of material in many Islamic languages—learned treatises, poetry, devotional works, etc.—that await careful study and analysis.

However, even from the albeit limited perspective of this present study, one or two concepts can be suggested that perhaps capture main lines of development in the various strains of the Iblīs tradition. The first is the coincidence of opposites or *coincidentia oppositorum* which has so intrigued Mircea Eliade. Images of this sort, Eliade explains, are by no means restricted to the experience of one religious tradition, but are to be found throughout man's religious history. "The *coincidentia oppositorum* is one of the most primitive ways of expressing the paradox of divine reality."[1]

The coincidence of opposites is clearly discernible in the treatment of Iblīs' personality in the Qurʾān commentaries and didactic tales quoted in Chapter One, as well as in the Sufi writings of Chapters Two and

[1] Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, tr. Rosemary Sheed (New York: World Publishing, 1963), p. 419.

Three. All the major strains of the tradition (with the possible exception of the *ḥadīth* material) express, in varying degrees, the moral ambiguity in the Iblīs nature. True, he is condemned as evil by many; nevertheless, all the blame for his sins is rarely laid at his door alone. Oftentimes, he takes on the role of the tragic victim, condemned for his loving obedience.

The utilization of the *coincidentia oppositorum* reaches its zenith, of course, in the works of Al-Ḥallāj and ʿAin Al-Quḍāt. These masters were clearly concerned not only with the ambiguity of Iblīs' personality, but also with the paradox to which the Iblīs motif pointed in the heart of the divine reality itself (e.g., *irāda* vs. *amr*). Eliade explains that such expressions are meant to confront man with the ultimate incomprehensibility of the Transcendent who can be apprehended only as paradox, mystery, and absolute freedom.

> In a word, these myths, rites, and theories involving the *coincidentia oppositorum* teach men that the best way of apprehending God or the ultimate reality is to cease, if only for a few seconds, considering and imagining divinity in terms of immediate experience; such an experience could only perceive fragments and tensions.[2]

Eliade observes several general solutions to the clash of opposites in man's religious history: in some cases the conflict between opposing poles generates a "third term," while, in other cases, the polarities coexist in a state of eternal tension. Some confrontations result in a complete transcendence of opposites, while others are resolved in a radical dualism that allows of no mediation between opposing poles.[3] The Iblīs tradition does not fit neatly into any one of these particular options, but different strains coincide with different resolutions of the tension. Most frequently, however, the emphasis in the Iblīs motif is either on the paradoxical, eternal coexistence of opposites, or on the transcendence of opposites in the state of mystical union which draws the Sufi beyond all polarities.

Eliade does not deal to any great extent with Islamic material in his analysis of the phenomena of the *coincidentia oppositorum*. Much of his effort is focused on the transcendence of opposites experienced in ritual orgy, transvestism, myths of androgyny, and the like.[4] His most thorough analysis, however, is reserved for the Indian experience, where he locates the ambivalence between graciousness and malevolence in the Hindu divinities themselves.[5]

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[2] Mircea Eliade, *The Two and the One*, tr. J. M. Cohen (London: Harvill Press, 1965), p. 82.

[3] Mircea Eliade, *The Quest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 175.

[4] See Mircea Eliade, *The Two and the One*, pp. 82, 113-114, 122-124; *Patterns*, pp. 423-425; *Shamanism*, tr. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 352.

[5] Eliade, *The Two and the One*, pp. 91-94.

However, the goal in the Indian traditions is to transcend the contradictions and paradoxes encountered at all levels of experience (including the realm of the divinities) and to achieve the state of liberation in which all conflict ceases.[6] It is this fact that motivated R. C. Zaehner to distinguish sharply between the experience of *coincidentia oppositorum* in a Hindu-Buddhist environment and in one that is permeated by the Western traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). Zaehner interprets the Indian quest for liberation through the transcendence of all opposites to be indicative of a very particular apprehension of the Absolute, one that is not shared by Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. Whereas the Absolute of India transforms conflict into blissful peace, the God of revelation is Himself a paradoxical tension of opposites. He is blissful peace, but He is also *saevus deus*, the savage God of terrible might. The resolution of opposites in Him does not entail the obliteration of the tension of these opposites; that tension remains and manifests itself in God's own actions.[7]

Zaehner insists that this distinction in perceptions of the Absolute is intimately linked to both groups' attitudes towards evil. The strongly monotheistic traditions interpret sin as an act of disobedience against a transcendent God whose ways are ultimately beyond human understanding. The traditions of India, on the other hand, identify evil more with matter, and, therefore, they radically oppose pure spirit to those created substances man calls "body" and "self."[8] In Zaehner's view, the *saevus deus* of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is not exempt, as is His Indian counterpart, from those paradoxical inner tensions that

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[6] Eliade asserts that man's desire for liberation is the catalyst for the development of the Indian techniques of meditation which train the novice in the ways to overcome the *coincidentia oppositorum*. The desired outcome is a transcendence of the existential polarities encountered in the earthly and spirit worlds, and the attainment of the Absolute which exists in a non-conditioned state beyond all dualities and contraries. For Eliade's discussion of this process, see *The Two and the One*, pp. 94-95, 118-121; *Patterns*, p. 420; *The Quest*, pp. 168-171; *Images and Symbols*, tr. Philip Mairet (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), pp. 82-85; *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, tr. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 267-273.

[7] See R. C. Zaehner, *Our Savage God* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1974), p. 16.

Zaehner is not alone in his recognition of this tension in the God of revelation. The same general conviction is expressed by Van Der Leeuw in his discussion of δαίμων and θεός. These two realities, he suggests, are not identical, but neither is δαίμων necessarily an inferior being. The God of the Old Testament seems to possess both aspects, and in Islam and Christianity evil spirits are powers inimical to God but subject to Him, thus creating a definite relationship between them. "...in the very concept of God the demonic continues to proclaim its presence, whether as absolute incalculability (predestination), or as inestimable mercy." See *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, 2 vols., tr. J. E. Turner (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1938; reprint ed., New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 1:139-140; Eliade, *Patterns*, p. 419.

[8] Zaehner, *Our Savage God*, pp. 234-235.

wreak havoc in the world by creating suffering and pain, whose meaning is inaccessible to human comprehension. In the cosmos governed by the God of revelation, men and women must pinpoint the source of their affliction within the Godhead, and not relegate it simply to the material realm.

This theme of God's savagery and His intimate relationship with human suffering is suffused throughout the work of R.C. Zaehner; he never tires of pointing out the inconsistencies and actual violence demonstrated by the God of revelation. As Yahweh in the Old Testament, for example, He rejoices in the carnage and destruction wrought upon Israel's enemies, viz., the annihilation of the inhabitants of Jericho.[9]

So, too, in Islam, Zaehner continues, Allāh, the God of revelation, manifests Himself as frighteningly ambivalent. He is both the source of healing light (*nūr*) and the wielder of wrathful fire (*nār*);[10] He is the God of Compassion and Mercy (Ar-Raḥmān, Ar-Raḥīm); but at the same time He is the Subduer (Al-Qahhār), the Tyrant (Al-Jabbār) who avenges wrongs with staggering ferocity. Indeed, He does not refrain from deceitful ruses; in fact He is the champion over all of those who would vie with Him in wiliness: "And they were wily and God was wily, but God was the best of the wily ones!" (Qurʾān 3:54).[11]

While Zaehner discovers the *saevus deus* primarily in Old Testament Judaism and Islam, he does not limit Him to these spheres alone. Much of Zaehner's time in *Our Savage God* is dedicated to sensitizing anew the adherents of the Christian tradition to the ambiguous nature of the God they worship. Christians, he insists, have far too long glossed over the terrible side of God, manifest through His cruelty in the Old Testament and His willingness in the New Testament to sacrifice His own son.

> The modern intellectual refuses to accept the frenzied God of the Old Testament, whose criminal lunacy seems to be once and for all confirmed in the New; for it is he who tortured his son to death in order to 'save' first the Jews and then the Gentiles.[12]
>
> The crucifixion of Jesus means that God demonstrates to man that he is so utterly unfair and crazy as to crucify himself. What he asks us to do is precisely this....
>
> ...This certainly is sheer 'stupidity' and 'silliness' to the intellectuals....[13]

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[9] Joshua 6:17-21. See also R. C. Zaehner, *Zen, Drugs and Mysticism* (New York: Random House, 1973; reprint edition, Vintage Books, 1974), p. 163 and *Our Savage God*, pp. 225-226.

[10] See Qurʾān 24:35-38, 50:20-30 and R. C. Zaehner, *Our Savage God*, p. 285.

[11] See also R. C. Zaehner, *Matter and Spirit* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 69-70; *Zen, Drugs and Mysticism*, p. 168; *Our Savage God*, p. 239.

[12] Zaehner, *Our Savage God*, p. 278.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 299.

One can easily be put off by the theatrical quality of Zaehner's style, especially in his later works. He is out to shock, and often succeeds. And because he so relentlessly maintains a high emotional pitch in his writing, it can become difficult to extricate the sober ideas from the dramatic frills.

Nevertheless, Zaehner's analysis of the concept of *saevus deus*, coupled with Eliade's basic notion of *coincidentia oppositorum*, sheds definite light on the Iblīs motif, especially when both ideas are applied specifically to the relationship between God and Satan. In Zaehner's eyes, the role of Satan is that of a divine instrument who obediently carries out commands, responsibility for which rests with God. And since the actions of the satanic instrument produce pain and destruction—what men call evil—and since responsibility for these deeds resides ultimately with God, then God is clearly involved in causing man's suffering and affliction. But why did God not restrain Satan and prevent his dissemination of evil in the world?

> Because it would appear there is evil in the very heart of God.... You cannot put the blame on man or even on Satan; you have to blame, if blame you must, him who is alone responsible, God, the Creator of heaven and earth....[14]

Zaehner feels that this paradoxical reality of an ambivalent God is given more credence in the Islamic tradition (than, for example, in the Christian) where *makr*, wiliness or deceit, is ascribed to Him. Using His *makr*, God leads men and women astray when He so desires. Christianity, on the other hand, shies away from associating such a characteristic too closely to God; the power of deception, therefore, must be relegated to Satan alone.[15]

Since in Islam the polarities in God are accepted into the fabric of mainstream religious life, Zaehner explains, Sufi teaching warns the novice that his relationship with the transcendent God is never secure, but must be characterized by the bi-polar experience of hope (*rajā'*) and

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[14] *Ibid.*, p. 237.

[15] R. C. Zaehner, *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane* (London: Clarendon Press, 1957; Oxford University Press, 1961; reprint ed., 1967), p. 101.

Nevertheless, as Eliade indicates, while orthodox Christianity will not allow the Transcendent to be tainted by any intimate association with evil, popular Christian piety has not hesitated to do so. Eliade's own data spring from the folklore of Southeast Europe, especially Rumania, but they are by no means restricted to that region alone (See *The Two and the One*, pp. 82-88). The conclusions Eliade draws from his material tend to confirm that, despite orthodox Christianity's attempts to tame the *saevus deus* and downplay His ambivalence, He survived in His pristine state on the level of popular belief. "What counts for us is that the popular mind has been pleased to imagine the loneliness of God and His comradeship with the Devil, and the Devil's role as God's servant, collaborator and even chief counsellor; to imagine, moreover, the divine origin of the Devil....in fact a certain sympathy between God and the Devil..." (*ibid.*, p. 88).

fear (*khawf*).[16] Hope rests only in the conviction that God's compassion and mercy will predominate in His dealings with His creatures, despite His *makr*.[17]

How should the faithful believer respond, once he has apprehended the Absolute as a *coincidentia oppositorum* and *saevus deus*, who, as Van Der Leeuw describes, manifests His dark or demonic side (what Zaehner calls "the evil in the very heart of God") in His absolute incalculability? The course of action Zaehner suggests recalls dramatically a major theme from Iblīs' tragic soliloquies: do not struggle vainly with questions of God's fairness and His justice, or with distinguishing His will (*irāda*) from His command (*amr*); the only authentic response open to the true believer is *islām*, submission before God because He is God. From this act all else flows. Without *islām* there can be no act of faith, no true response of love, because *islām* supersedes them both.[18]

Finally, Zaehner's elaboration of the *saevus deus* theme in Islamic religious life is of particular significance in any attempt to grapple with the meaning of the "damned lover" strain of the Iblīs motif so dramatically presented in the writings of Al-Ḥallāj and ʿAin Al-Quḍāt.[19]

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[16] See Zaehner, *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane*, pp. 84-85.

[17] See Zaehner, *Our Savage God*, p. 296.

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 296-297, 300.

[19] It is important to note that Louis Massignon has offered a very different interpretation of the "damned lover" motif, one which does not allude at all to the image of *saevus deus*. Instead Massignon suggests that the meaning of the "damned lover" motif is linked closely with the Islamic attitude towards faith (*imān*) and love (*maḥabba*). In Islam, Massignon explains, faith is the primary virtue, superseding even love, whereas, for example, in Christianity, love is clearly accounted superior to faith as St. Paul affirms: "In a word, there are three things that last for ever: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of them all is love" (1 Cor. 13:13).

Christianity, therefore, logically excludes the possibility of a damned lover, because damnation of its very essence means the annihilation of the ability to love. However, in an Islamic context, Massignon suggests, damnation consists in the inability to submit before the transcendent God, and the refusal to accept His decree. Nevertheless, the condemned Muslim would be able to love intensely the One who damns him. Iblīs' role as "damned lover" becomes perfectly understandable, Massignon believes, when viewed from this perspective (see Louis Massignon, "Al-Ḥallāj: le phantasme crucifié des docètes et Satan selon les Yézidis," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 63 (1911): 201-202. Similarly in *Passion*, 3:174 note 2).

The purpose here is not to analyze in depth the basic difference Massignon discovers between the Islamic perception of faith and love and that of other traditions, especially Christianity. The issue at hand is far more precise. Given the proposed distinction, does the Iblīs tradition, as Massignon implies, actually serve as a vehicle to express concretely Muslims' belief in the primacy of faith over love?

The response that immediately comes to mind is that the extensive material examined in the three previous chapters does not to any great extent address itself to this specific problem. If anything, the point is made, not that faith supersedes love, but that both faith and unbelief must pass away in spiritual ecstasy. Most significantly, the Sufis do not seem to have considered this issue of the faith-love relationship to be the motivating concern behind their use of the Iblīs motif.

For the "damned lover" motif incorporates both the sense of God's ambivalence (He reveals His will, yet His will is a paradox) and His actual cruelty: Iblīs suffers curse and destruction at the hands of his Beloved, even though he appears to lack culpability for his offense. Nevertheless, Iblīs accepts all out of love because it comes from God. That is sufficient justification for him; he need not ponder the why or wherefore.

There seems to be special significance to the fact that it is the devil figure—and not a morally neutral or pious figure—who is put to the test of God's loving destruction and who emerges from his trial triumphant (especially in the work of ʿAin Al-Quḍāt). Iblīs' attainment of intimacy with God seems more to highlight the frightening ambivalence at the most intimate recesses of divine reality than to laud the spiritual courage of Iblīs. By making Iblīs God's closest associate, the black light who wields the sword of divine power, the one who protects the white light of the Divine Presence from desecration, this strain of the Sufi Iblīs tradition incorporates the Devil himself into the works of God, especially those works that touch men most intimately, i.e., the dispensation of eternal reward, punishment, and the intimacy of mystical union.

The closer the association between God and the now victorious, "damned lover" Iblīs, the more Iblīs takes on the role of divine attribute rather than that of antithetic force of evil. In order for God to be God, He needs Iblīs in his role as intimate of the Divine Presence; and in this dynamic interaction God reveals the paradox, the *coincidentia oppositorum*, at the core of His being: He is both love and destruction, salvation and damnation; He is Ar-Raḥmān and *saevus deus*.

APPENDIX

The present study of Iblīs lays no claim to definitiveness. It is only one step leading to a thorough analysis of the Iblīs tradition in Islamic mysticism and Islamic religious life in general. Research, hopefully, will be pursued into the modern period, both among established Sufi groups as well as among practitioners of a more popular form of piety. Only then will an accurate picture of Iblīs' role begin to emerge. One need but examine the writings of the eminent poet-statesman Muḥammad Iqbāl to discover first hand the influence that the Sufi Iblīs tradition has had on a renowned contemporary religious and political personality.[1]

Important research waits to be done in other areas, those that reach beyond a particularized Sufi context. The function of Iblīs in Islamic gnosticism, briefly alluded to in reference to the Ismāʿīlī Community, deserves fuller treatment. Apart from the Ismāʿīlīs, there exists another community whose involvement with Iblīs permeates even more extensively their spirituality, viz., the Yezīdīs. The Yezīdīs originate in Kurdistan and, although much of their theology belies the fact, they appear to have developed from Sunni Islam. Their scripture is no longer the Qurʾān but two short treatises known as *The Book of Revelation* and *The Black Book*. These, however, do not in any way play the prominent role in Yezīdī religious life as does the Qurʾān in Islam.[2]

More significant for the solidification of Yezīdī theology was the appearance of their most revered saint, the Sufi *shaykh* ʿAdi Ibn Musāfir (†1162 C.E.), whose tomb at Lalesh remains the focal point of the community's pilgrimage. Shaykh ʿAdi proclaimed the total transcendence of the Good God; yet He it is who created Iblīs/Ash-Shayṭān.[3]

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[1] Much important work has already been done on Iqbāl's use of the Iblīs motif. See Annemarie Schimmel's *Gabriel's Wing* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963) and "Die Gestalt Satans in Muḥammad Iqbāls Werk," *Kairos* 5 (1963): 124-137. Consult also A. Bausani, "Satana nell'opera filosofico-poetica di Muḥammad Iqbāl," *Rivista degli studi orientali* 30 (1955): 55-102; Muḥammad Ashraf, *Thus Conferred Satan* (Lahore: The Book House, n.d.); Taj Muḥammad Khayal, "Iqbāl's Conception of Satan and His Place in Ideal Society," in *Iqbāl: The Poet of Tomorrow*, ed. Khawaja Abdur Rahim (Lahore: The Central Iqbāl Committee, 1968), pp. 221-239. Consult the bibliography for texts and translations of Muḥammad Iqbāl's work.

[2] For an English translation of these two texts, see Giuseppe Furlani, *Religious Texts of the Yezidis*, tr. Jamshedji Maneckji Unvala (Bombay: n.p., 1960).

[3] See Roger Lescot, *Enquête sur les yézidis de syrie et du djebel sindjār* (Beirut: Institut français de Damas, 1938), p. 25. See the bibliography for additional works in Arabic and English on the Yezīdī Community.

The transcendent Creator God, moreover, is passive and disinterested in sustaining the every day functioning of the universe. He has, therefore, an alter-ego who performs these executive functions called Malak Ṭāwūs, Peacock Angel. Who is this Peacock Angel? None other than Iblīs/Ash-Shayṭān who has been restored to his previous glory after his fall from grace.[4]

Because of the prominence of Malak Ṭāwūs in the Yezīdī system, Yezīdīs have been accused of devil-worship. In fact, quite the opposite is true: they deny the existence of evil and Hell. The chief and best of the angels who faltered has been restored through his loving devotion to the God of Goodness. His redemption is proof that evil is not an enduring metaphysical reality. The Yezīdīs are forbidden even to pronounce the name Iblīs/Ash-Shayṭān; he is known only as Malak Ṭāwūs.[5]

Not only is evil seen to be a temporary lapse, so too is Hell not perceived as a permanent state of damnation. Men and women expiate the punishment due their evil deeds through successive reincarnations. Thus all, eventually, attain the state of perfection.[6]

The Yezīdīs, as Massignon indicates, drew much inspiration from the life and teachings of Al-Ḥallāj. Shaykh ᶜAdi and his followers believed that both Al-Ḥallāj and Iblīs were pardoned because of their love and single-minded dedication to God.[7] In the Yezīdī pantheon there are seven *sinjāq*, bronze (or iron) peacocks, the seventh being Manṣūr Al-Ḥallāj. He is considered an eschatological figure who will return at the end of time to purify the world. Only then will the final apocalypse occur.[8]

Al-Ḥallāj is also deeply enmeshed in popular Yezīdī lore. The prohibition among the Yezīdīs against women using narrow-necked jars that gurgle when poured is attributed to a Ḥallājian legend. After he was put to death, Al-Ḥallāj's body was burnt and the ashes were cast into the river. Al-Ḥallāj's sister came to the river, drew water and drank, whereupon she became pregnant. The child she brought forth was none other than Manṣūr himself. Women refrain from using such jars, whose gurgling sound is the voice of Al-Ḥallāj, lest they too become pregnant.[9]

A further avenue of valuable research would focus on the non-Sufi works in modern literature that relate to the Iblīs myth. The symbol of

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[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 45, 53.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

[7] Louis Massignon, "Les yézīdīs du mont sindjār: 'adorateurs d'Iblīs' " in *Satan, Les études carmélitaines* (Brussels: Desclée de Brouwer, 1948), p. 175.

[8] Louis Massignon, *Passion*, 1:82, 91; 2:24. See also Roger Lescot, *Enquête sur les yézidis*, p. 66.

[9] Louis Massignon, "Le phantasme crucifié des docètes et satan selon les yézīdīs," pp. 205-206; *Passion*, 1:619, 674; 2:38, 368-369.

Iblīs/Ash-Shayṭān crops up in a variety of forms, in disparate literary genres, ranging from didactic and devotional texts in the traditional mold to Marxist critiques of Islamic religious society. The latter is eminently represented in the writings of Ṣādiq Jalāl Al-ʿAẓm,[10] while the former is exemplified in the work of ʿAbbās Maḥmūd Al-ʿAqqād.[11]

A middle ground appears in the essays, plays, short stories, etc. of eminent writers like Tawfīq Al-Ḥakīm[12] and Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd,[13] where a wide range of images, symbols, and themes is conjured from the various dimensions of Iblīs/Ash-Shayṭān's rich mythic heritage. Whether the concern be the exploration of themes based on the Qurʾānic Iblīs or the exposition of moral and philosophical theories sparked by encounters with the Devil in a Faustian guise, the image of Iblīs remains very much a living symbol in the minds of both religious and secular writers in the contemporary Islamic world.

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[10] See Dr. Ṣādiq Jalāl Al-ʿAẓm, "Maʾsāt Iblīs," in *Naqd al-fikr ad-dīnī* (Beirut: Dār aṭ-ṭalīʿa, 1969), pp. 99-132, and Dr. Muḥammad ʿIzzat Naṣr Allāh, *Ar-Radd ʿalā Ṣādiq Al-ʿAẓm* (Beirut: Dār filasṭīn li ʾt-taʾlīf wa ʾt-tarjama, 1970).

[11] ʿAbbās Maḥmūd Al-ʿAqqād, *Iblīs* (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-ʿarabī, 1969).

[12] See Tawfīq Al-Ḥakīm, *ʿAhd Ash-Shayṭān* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-lubnānī, 1973); "Hīla shayṭānīya," in *Aqāṣīṣ wa nawādir Ashʿab* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-lubnānī, 1973), pp. 95-106; "Imraʾa ghalabat Ash-Shayṭān," in *Arinī Allāh* (Cairo: Maktabat al-ādāb, 1968), pp. 135-142; "Iblīs yantaṣir," in *Madrasat al-mughaffalīn* (Cairo: Dār al-hilāl, 1972), pp. 32-36.

[13] See Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd, "Iblīs: muḥāwala li fahm al-khayr wa sharr," in *Iblīs* (Cairo: Dār al-qalam, 1966), pp. 49-83; *Ash-Shayṭān yaḥkum* (Cairo: Al-Maktab al-miṣrī, 1977); *Ash-Shayṭān yaskunu fī baytinā* (Cairo: Dār an-naḥdat al-ʿarabīya, 1973).

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